The Great Fraud of 1914-18

by

Pat Walsh

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The Great Fraud of 1914

The Great War of 1914 was Britain's Great War. But it should also be called Britain's Great Fraud on Ireland and the world.

When Britain encouraged and then entered the European war that was taking shape in August 1914 it made it into a Great War. It was Great Britain that put the Great in the Great War. That is to say that without Great Britain's participation in it there would have been no Great War.

In entering the European war Britain stated its aims in grand universal terms that were idealistic in the extreme. These aims were not only idealistic and unachievable but they were fraudulent.

The objective of the Great Fraud was to show to the world that Britain was fighting a good war against an evil that had to be vanquished. The war was proclaimed as being for "*civilisation against the Barbarian*", for "*democracy*" against "*Prussianism*". And it was also supposedly a "*war for small nations*" for "*poor little Belgium*" or for "*gallant Servia*" and for a host of other long forgotten things.

But what it came down to was a pulverising of Germany and the taking of its trade and markets in what was a traditional Balance of Power war catastrophically invested with a great moral mission.

The Fraud that was perpetrated on Ireland and the world, concerning the character of the war Britain proclaimed itself to be fighting, was produced in order to convince any doubters, at home and abroad, about the rightfulness of it.

These reasons were also later useful in enlisting the cannon fodder necessary to see the job through. And when Britain's Great War did not prove great enough to achieve its objectives and the United States had to be procured as an ally to complete the job the Great Fraud was both perpetuated and enhanced. A massive propaganda effort was launched that not only coloured the settlement of the war to the detriment of Europe and beyond but also created the myths that mystify understanding of it to this day.

And so vast armies were recruited for the waging of the war and millions of people were killed in it, including tens of thousands of Irishmen who enlisted in the British Army to fight, inspired by the professed ideals of establishing 'Democracy' and the 'Rights of Small Nations' universally, and especially in Ireland.

Britain's Great War and the Home Rulers decision to take part in it had momentous consequences for Ireland. Out of it came the fall of the Home Rule Party and of 'Imperial Ireland' as a result of Britain failing to win the quick victory that was expected. As well, in revulsion against the murderous British swindle, there came the rise of the Irish democracy and the Irish Republic.

The British declaration of war in August 1914 was the point of origin for the catastrophic history of Europe and its hinterlands in the twentieth century. The manner in which Britain fought that war and the peace settlements it determined at the end of it set in motion a train of events that are still working themselves out today with tragic consequences for humanity.

Part 1

Delenda est Germania

The Great War was not Britain's first world war. The British state had fought two previous world wars, one between 1756 and 1763 and the other between 1793 and 1815. In both cases the main enemy had been France, who became an ally in Britain's third world war of 1914.

The world conflict known as the Great War was, however, like the two previous world wars, the consequence of the long-standing British geopolitical strategy known as the Balance of Power.

The Balance of Power policy originated in 1688, with the State established under William of Orange and the Glorious Revolution. And its first Balance of Power war, 'The War of the Grand Alliance,' against France, whom William had been in conflict with when he was a foreign King—was fought a year later, in 1689. A part of this war was waged in Ireland, between 1689 and 1691, and it had a disastrous effect on the country. But that was a normal characteristic of British Balance of Power wars that affected many other regions of the world over the following centuries in the same way.

The War of The Spanish Succession (1701-14) was the first war that England fought on a world scale and it exhibited the characteristic features of all the subsequent ones. Anti-Catholic England under William of Orange made alliance with the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire and the Spanish Inquisition to disrupt the state of Louis XIV of France. The Balance of Power strategy had no regard for what might be considered the social or political progressiveness of the enemy or reactionary nature of allies. It was only concerned with keeping the scales even on the Continent to England's advantage.

Britain's greatest Balance of Power war was the Seven Years War (1756-63). It was fought in Europe by Austria, France, Russia, Sweden and Saxony against Prussia and England, and in North America and India by France against England. During the Seven Years War the foundations of the British Empire were established through Prussian arms in Europe, financed by Pitt, and a small English intervention on Frederick the Great's side. The Royal Navy and British Army used the opportunity elsewhere in the world to put paid to France's ambitions to rival England. In 1759 England pulled out of the European conflict, abandoning her Prussian ally when British arms had managed to drive the French out of Canada and end French influence in India.

In 1815, after Napoleon had been defeated in another global conflict, Britain dominated the world outside of Europe and the Continent was reordered at the Congress of Vienna. But Vienna had a lot to be said for it in comparison to the peace settlement that ended the war of 1914 at Versailles. It included the defeated Power, France, in its counsels and produced a functional peace in Europe for a century.

There were many small wars and revolutions in Europe between 1815 and 1914 but these were all part of the general sorting out of things with Europe accommodating itself in its structure to the new nationalist forces that had developed after Britain had stirred these up in its war on Napoleon. It is probable that the European war of 1914 would have been the culmination of this sorting out if Britain had not chose to intervene in it to make it another, more devastating, world war.

From 1815 England withdrew to an indirect disruption of Europe to maintain a free hand to conquer the rest of the world and establish the world market through its powerful navy. Revolutionaries were encouraged to London where they plotted revolution against Britain's former allies in Europe. In order to be master of the world, Britain chose to break-up the alliance of Austria, Russia and Prussia. So Britain played the card of nationalism against each of the continental states. Lord Palmerston's first success in this was to detach Belgium from the Netherlands and set it up as an independent state in the British interest—an event that was to have important ramifications in August 1914.

Europe was peaceful for a generation from 1871. There had been five wars in the couple of decades previous. But when Prussia stopped Louis Napoleon in his tracks Europe became settled and prosperous again. The European Powers began to develop the free hands that only England had previously possessed. They began to develop their industrial capacities and their trade and became minor rivals to Britain in the new age of Imperialism.

This was a situation which concerned Britain because it never wanted to see things settle. Its objective in the world was 'progress' determined by itself. This 'progress' was beneficial to Britain in the way that it not only gave England the advantage of setting the global agenda and the moral ground rules connected to it but also in the way that it disrupted traditional forms of living in other regions producing instability as they had to adapt to it.

The island nation

It should at the outset be understood that Britain went to war in 1914 out of no national necessity. It was entirely a matter of Imperial free will that it did.

Britain is an island off the coast of mainland Europe. The channel between the British island and the continent gave Britain a unique security making its position entirely different from that of any continental country. By buying off and incorporating its neighbour to the North into the Union and subduing the neighbouring island to the west, through conquest and depopulation, England ensured its security and created the Imperial State.

And because Britain had security, it had complete freedom of action to meddle in Europe and in the rest of the world at its leisure. It had the choice whether to intervene or stay out of any war which arose on the continent or anywhere else in the world.

If Britain chose to intervene in continental disputes it could do so with limited commitment, restricting its contribution of blood and treasure to whatever amount it desired. If the limited commitment was unsuccessful the effect was not disastrous for Britain. So long as the Royal Navy controlled the seas Britain had complete security and freedom to choose if it would break off its intervention, retiring to its island (and world-wide Empire) or increasing its commitment for further advantage.

The continental Powers had none of the advantages that Britain possessed. They could easily be invaded by their land neighbours and had to commit most of their resources to their own defence. Freedom of action existed only on rare and brief occasions for them. When their security was threatened, they had little freedom to act and had to defend themselves for dear life. And, since the Continental Powers had neither security nor freedom of action, preserving their position on the continent always superseded any ambitions they might develop for empire. Any piece of territory they had acquired or any market they had established had to be sacrificed for the sake of self-preservation whenever they were threatened. Thus did England whittle away the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and French Empires and trade over the centuries, expanding the British Empire at their expense.

England could make its limited commitment to war on the continent of decisive importance by making an intervention in support of the second strongest Power or group of Powers on the continent against the strongest Power, hampering the strongest Power and making the second Power or group of Powers temporarily the strongest. Then the process could start all over again, *ad infinitum*. And it did this with marvellous skill for two centuries, from 1688 to 1914.

By following its Balance of Power policy, Britain was able to play a decisive role on the continent, keeping Europe divided and embroiled in war, and achieve dominance with a limited commitment of its own resources, leaving a considerable surplus of blood and treasure available for expanding trade and Empire overseas. And Britain's unique advantage of having security through its control of the sea was one of the main factors which allowed Britain its stability to develop its great economic wealth, and domestic democracy based on Empire.

The British ruling circle, which obtained its wealth through piracy and the operation of a vast slaving system, then got 'civilisation' and came to think of itself as the modern Rome, creating and defending world civilisation—its civilisation which it imposed on the world. And it described this process as progress to be followed by others until England changed the rules again.

From such a vantage point in 1900 at the zenith of Empire it looked around for its Carthage and found it in Germany. And when the war against Germany was launched there was a general consensus that it must suffer the same fate as the original Carthage: *Germania est delenda* (Germany must be destroyed) became the watchword of progress.

The problem of Germany

The source of Britain's Great War lies in the formation of the German state as a consequence of France's war on Prussia in 1870. This event disrupted the Balance of Power on the continent as far as Britain was concerned and marked Germany down as its object. Prior to 1870 Germany had been seen in Britain as the "*land of poets and dreamers*" but, from the moment it showed a substance, some elements in England who concerned themselves with such things began preaching war on Germany in the Imperialist periodicals of the time.

Britain had historically been the ally of Prussia and the enemy of France. During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1, there was almost universal support for Prussia in England. But then there was a great reversal of attitude. The reversal is easily explained. When Germany was divided and weak and the land of "*poets and dreamers*" England looked kindly upon her. But when Germany acquired national coherence and a credible military capacity England began re-orienting against her.

The German state consolidated itself during a peculiar time in England. The British Empire had reached a stage when it saw itself as something really special in the world. And it began to worry whether this stage would last or would it go the same way

as Rome and the empires that followed, many of which it had seen off itself. So Britain looked for reasons for its superiority in the world. If it understood the basis for its own superiority, it might stave off the fall that Rome had suffered.

To explain its superiority Britain saturated itself in Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism was all about the law of the jungle, the survival of the fittest and racial hierarchy. Britain fancied itself as the King of the jungle. Its products were vast ethnic cleansings, genocides of the inferior races, and the Imperial colonisation of the 'waste' spaces with the superior races.

Social Darwinism was a racial ideology that explained why the Anglo-Saxon was the master-race and how he would inherit the earth from the feebler races, who had failed to exterminate the lesser breeds thoroughly enough. British Imperial propagandists proclaimed that the Anglo-Saxon was the great extirpating race in the world in the creation of '*Greater Britain*' and it saw the US expansion across its continent as further evidence of the Anglo-Saxon talent for such progressing of humanity.

These notions faded after Hitler, a great admirer of England, took them up to attempt to emulate England's success. But it was in Britain that they originated and found their great expression prior to the Great War.

But here lay the nightmare. After building up the Anglo-Saxon as the most vigorous race of the species, which was destined to dominate the world, Britain began to take fright when it saw evidence of a more vigorous race of Saxons on the horizon. When Britain looked at Germany it saw itself in the mirror—but in more youthful and vigorous form. And, when this realisation of the potential consequences set in, it was determined that it couldn't be let happen and the English mind was made up to destroy Germany.

The fact that Germany might not develop in the same mode as England did not occur to it.

Socialized Germany

Along with the German consolidation, a number of English writers became very concerned at the vigour and energy that Germany brought in service of its trade and industry and some described it as "*state socialism*", contrasting it favourably with England's *laissez-faire* system.

After Germany became a state, it brought the resources of science and systematic effort to its industry and educated its workforce to a much higher standard than Britain did with its factory fodder. It established a first-class system of technical education and organised itself on socialistic lines. The partnership between scientist and worker, the socialized work practices of German industry, the wider distribution of wealth created, the welfare provision, and the state intervention in economic development, combined to give German commerce the edge within the Free Trade system Britain had imposed on the world. And, given a level playing field, it became apparent that Germany was going to become a growing force in commerce.

This attracted the attention of people in Britain who thought about the significance of such things and they warned that Germany would have to be cut down to size, sooner or later. Initially they were ignored, since the general thrust of Balance of Power politics had been against France and Russia. But they proved to be prophetic in their warnings.

From around the end of the 19th Century reports began to arrive from abroad through British consuls and commercial agents telling of increasing German competition against British goods and the ability of German merchants. These German commercial travellers were more active than their British counterparts, spoke the languages of their customers, and endeavoured to find out what they wanted manufactured rather than simply selling them what had been made.

Internal German industrial growth had been brought about by the Prussian-German Customs Union. The protection of German industry was viewed as an unfriendly act in England and the Germans were told to embrace Free Trade, so they could be subject to British commercial power before they had acquired an economic substance. Bismarck resisted the pressure and German industry thrived both in quantity and quality.

The English view was that the German products that were increasingly penetrating their markets were cheap and nasty. To make sure they weren't bought, a law was passed, the *Merchandise Marks Act* of 1887, which made it obligatory for all manufactured goods imported into Britain, Ireland and the colonies to bear the mark "Made in Germany". The principle of Free trade was amended when the freedom of the market proved disadvantageous to England.

However, the "*mark of the beast*", as it became known in England, had the opposite effect than that intended. Consumers began to seek out the goods that were "Made in Germany" for their superior quality and competitive price. "*Made in Germany*" became an advertising slogan for German goods.

The German merchant marine, developed to carry the manufactured goods its industry produced and Germany's share of world trade, expanded within the global market Britain had established. Shipping lines and shipping yards grew and the German passenger service became the foremost in the world.

All this was done without a navy. But such a situation could not persist. German trade required a navy to defend it and the building of a German navy was something England chose not to tolerate.

The commercial war

England's Great War, like other previous wars, was very much about advancing British commercial interests in the world through force when honest competition within the system it had itself established was going against it. Trade monopolies had been built up in many parts of the world after conquering Britain had conquered them and a Free Trade system had then been imposed to exploit the markets fully.

During the nineteenth century Britain's emerging industrial capitalism, in conjunction with the Royal Navy, began to establish a world system to supply its workers with cheap food and raw materials. This began with the anti-Corn Law agitation following the 1832 Reform of the franchise. Imperialism, which was a mere policy of the aristocracy in 1800, became an essential component of existence for the British state, ameliorating the class conflict that threatened with the growth of industrial capitalism.

In its particular course of capitalist development, in which it reduced its workers to proletarianisation, Britain found it difficult to avert social breakdown. It staved revolution off by the repeal of the Corn Laws and by forcing the world to supply it with cheap food from the 1840s. And later on it staved off the problem through the new popular Imperialism, the construction of "Greater Britain" and the expansion of Britain across the 'waste' spaces of the world cleansed of the waste of humanity.

And so England had its safety valve against the crushing conditions of industrial production that made life, for all but the privileged few, intolerable. It got rid of its energetic spirits and the human dross of its capitalist development to its colonies, and

to America which pushed them out west to clear the Indian lands of the natives.

But, as a result of the Free Trade system it established, globalised England could no longer feed itself or live on its own resources. It could only exist through manipulating the world system it established and playing the Balance of Power on the European continent, since the Balance of Power policy was what enabled Britain to manipulate the rest of the world in its interest.

When England achieved world dominance in the early nineteenth century, it compelled the world to submit to the course of capitalist development it was laying down. Germany, the "*land of poets and dreamers*", was forced along this road and became a state in order to survive and function within a world largely constructed by England and Free Trade.

England presumed that Germany would develop the same problems of population growth and social unrest as itself, and would have to solve them in the same way. But Germany's different road to capitalist development produced something altogether different.

Germany had no overseas empire to speak of. And, having no territory to populate, it had to make, from the start, social provision for civilised living for its masses within German territory. To do this it began to develop a State out of its traditional feudal forms, along socialistic lines.

Germany's working class found its "*place in the sun*" within Germany, in the social arrangements that made the German worker a willing participant in the social-democratic economy, and part of the most prosperous economy in Europe by 1910.

The issue of Protection or Tariff Reform was raised in England in the hope that British trade would be saved by heavy customs duty against import commodities. But it was soon realised that, because England was chiefly an exporting country, a tax upon foreign goods would not save her industrial supremacy. From the moment that realisation entered into the minds of the British ruling class, war was conceived.

Roger Casement, an insider in Imperial affairs for many years, saw it this way and wrote a series of articles about it that were collected in '*The Crime against Europe*'.

James Connolly saw the Great War as a British trade war on Germany and as a kind of continuation of British commercial activity by other means. He understood that German capitalism—its methods, its workers and its science—were all superior to their British equivalents. Connolly published, in his *Workers' Republic*, long extracts from a book by an American writer, Frederic C. Howe, called '*Socialized Germany*', which described the productive and distributive socialism operated by the German state that Redmondite Ireland was fighting with England to destroy.

The British ruling class made the same deduction as well. It was determined, no matter what the cost, that Germany should not emerge from the wreckage of war capable of functioning in the manner that it did before. The Royal Navy, the greatest military force in the world, was given the job of strangling German ocean-going, commerce as its number one priority.

That was the major British war aim, not the "*war for civilisation*", "*war for small nations*", "*poor little Belgium*", "*gallant Servia*" or any of that guff. It was for the expansion of British trade and the destruction of a commercial competitor that men died in their millions at the front and women and children perished in hundreds of thousands through the Royal Navy's starvation blockade.

Keeping British supremacy

If the reader is sceptical about this view, that a war was required to bring about British commercial domination when economic competition was going against the Empire, this record of a 1910 conversation between Arthur Balfour and Henry White, the United States Ambassador in London, should be considered. It is taken from a book of White's experiences written in 1930:

> "*Balfour:* We are probably fools not to find a reason for declaring war on Germany before she builds too many ships and takes away our trade.
>
> "*White:* You are a very high-minded man in private life. How can you possibly contemplate anything so politically immoral as provoking a war against a harmless nation which has as good a right to a navy as you have? If you wish to compete with German trade, work harder.
>
> "*Balfour:* That would mean lowering our standard of living. Perhaps it would be simpler for us to have a war.
>
> "*White:* I am shocked that you of all men should enunciate such principles.
>
> "*Balfour:* Is it a question of right or wrong? Maybe it is just a question of keeping our supremacy." (Henry White and Allan Nevins, *Thirty Years Of American Diplomacy*, p.257.)

Britain had just the thing to promote collapse in Germany through the most powerful instrument of war that ever existed in the world—the British Navy. And prominent Britons began to note in their Imperial publications that Germany's social progressiveness was also its weak spot—its "*powder magazine*", which could be exploded by British naval blockade.

It was very fitting that Balfour replaced Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty in the 1915 Coalition Government. Under his direction Britain crippled German commercial and industrial development and retarded it through war for another generation.

The State interference, subsidy and social security characteristic of the German system that James Connolly praised in the Worker's Republic and which was anathema to the English bourgeoisie was also seen as a weakness by the British Admiralty.

The German workers, who had not been as exposed as the English masses to the rigours of the Free Market, and who were presumed to have a softness about them as a result of their comfortable living within the virtually socialist provisions of the German State, were believed to be very susceptible to a collapse under pressure.

The evolutionary socialist development of the German state was therefore destroyed by war, and conditions imposed on it after the war that produced quite a different development: Hitler looked to Social-Darwinist England as his ideal.

The making of a Great War.

It was asserted in British war propaganda that the Great War was planned and made in Germany and the implication today is the same: from England's historians to its state broadcasting apparatus, the BBC. If any 'balance' is provided, it is said that the war was the result of '*super-power rivalry*', and everyone was to blame. But this is nonsense—there was only one super-power at the time capable of making the Great War that materialised in 1914 and that was England.

There are very few histories that suggest that the Great War was conceived as an idea, planned for as a forthcoming event and actively made into a reality in England—despite the plentiful evidence to back this up. And that is only explicable through the notion that history is always written by the victors.

Leopold Maxse was the foremost anti-German writer in England at the turn of the 19th century into the 20th. At that time he stood out. But this was only because he was ahead of his time. He was not an isolated propagandist in any respect. There was a great interlinking within Imperial governing circles at the time, mainly on the basis of family connections. The Cecils were the great governing family of England since the Elizabethan era. Maxse's sister was married to the Prime Minister's son, Edward Cecil, and around this time she began an affair with Alfred Milner (the Imperial administrator), whom she married in 1921, upon Cecil's death. Maxse had the ear of the most influential people in the most important positions through marriage and he was also a member of the Coefficients (a Fabian group), dining club with Edward Grey, Lord Haldane, Milner and Leo Amery.

From Milner came his *kindergarten* in South Africa, that became th*e Round Table* (a grouping round the magazine of that name), that became the Royal Institute of International Affairs, that is known as Chatham House.

Maxse, from around November 1901, made a big effort to propagandise his belief that the growth of Germany needed to be counteracted by a great revolution in British policy. He wrote an influential article in his *National Review*, entitled '*British Foreign Policy*'. This suggested a settling of accounts with Czarist Russia to prepare a move against the new enemy, Germany. In December 1901 Maxse published a further article under the pseudonym "ABC etc." in *National Review* under the title, '*Some Consequences of an Anglo-Russian Undertaking*', which considered in more detail the other piece in the anti-German jigsaw—an Anglo-French Entente.

These highly significant articles produced much speculation at the time about who the authors exactly were. It was universally believed that there very important and influential people behind Maxse. The articles were taken very seriously in Russia, France, Germany and Japan, and a considerable amount of time was spent in efforts to find out who lay behind them. Only recently has the truth come out.

Maxse wrote the articles, but they were collaborations with Edward Grey, soon to be Liberal Foreign Minister; Lord Rosebery, the leader of the Liberal Imperialists; George Saunders, Times Berlin correspondent; Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, President of Queen's College Cork; Charles Hardinge, Secretary of the St. Petersburg Embassy and Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office 1905-10; and William Tyrrell, Grey's future Private Secretary at the Foreign Office. Hardinge made sure the articles found their way into important hands in Russia and later actually put the policy into operation in conjunction with his immediate superior, Grey.

Maxse's articles were not like other anti-German articles that began to flood the Imperial publications for two reasons. Firstly, the people who were intimately involved in their composition were in a position, or would be in a position shortly, to do something about the things they recommended. And secondly, they in fact, did—in such a way that the articles entitled 'British Foreign Policy' turned out to be the British Foreign Policy, from 1906, under the long serving Liberal Imperialist Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey—the man, more than any other single individual, who engineered the Great War of 1914.

England's Strategic Reorientation

In the decade prior to the Great War Edward Grey and the Liberal Imperialists managed to achieve a great strategic reorientation in British Foreign Policy.

During 1901/2 Joseph Chamberlain devised the project of an Anglo/German/American alliance that might have averted the Great War. Chamberlain was of the opinion that Britain's South African conquest brought about by the Boer War should be the final enlargement of the Empire and an era of internal consolidation should take precedence. But the Boer War unleashed a different dynamic, more in line with what the future Maxse and the Liberal Imperialists were carving out and was a turning point in England's relationship with Germany.

Chamberlain's scheme for Imperial consolidation ultimately fell victim to the irresistible momentum of continuous unlimited expansionism and the superseding of all inferior social, economic and political formations in its path.

The Liberal Imperialists trumped Chamberlain's more limited, definite and realistic ambitions with a new more virulent strain of Imperialism. It was a superseding of Unionism by Imperialism. But the combination of Liberal Free Trade and the new Imperialism produced an open-ended expansionism that could not be easily satisfied just at a time when territorial advance was coming up against the colonial possessions of the other Powers.

The Redmondite Imperialists in Ireland presented the Great War on Germany in August 1914 as a democracy going to war against the "Prussian Oligarchy". But the "great English democracy" did not plan, organise or arrange the Great War on Germany. It was all the work of the political and military oligarchy in the British Foreign Office and Committee of Imperial Defence, led by a small Liberal Imperialist coterie and assisted by elements of the Unionist opposition, behind the back of the British democracy. It was presented as a *fait accompli* to the democracy in August 1914 and what existed of the democracy swallowed it.

England in 1914 was democratic in the sense that it was the most democratic of aristocracies. Since only a minority possessed the franchise in England it was not as democratic as Germany, where every adult male had the vote. The semblance of a democratic parliament existed, but the guidance of foreign policy was not entrusted to it in the democratic age. It was the fear that it would be entrusted to it that led to the establishment of the Committee of Imperial Defence and ensuring that Edward Grey became Foreign Minister and a continuity of foreign policy was maintained within the Imperialist state. It was the thing that the Maxse articles made a great point to address, so that Russia and France could be assured of England's continued commitment to a war on Germany, under its new Liberal management after 1905.

The Foreign Office maintained the privilege of acting in secret and retained the right to report treaties, either not at all, or only in such parts as it deemed advisable, to the democracy. Parliament itself was only given the right to question such arrangements if it found out about them first, and then could only question the Minister in formal interrogatories. Only general questions could be put to him, as to whether a treaty had been made or not, and he was not obliged to reveal its terms, if he chose not to. The security and safety of the English state, the most important function of government, was thus only entrusted to an elite, officered by the gentry and aristocracy, who confided their policy largely to the memory and honour of gentlemen.

The Committee of Imperial Defence, which planned for the war on Germany, was established in 1902 by the Unionist Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, under pressure whipped up by the Liberal Imperialists. The CID was a product of the National Efficiency Movement that the Liberal Imperialists were strongly associated with and was in favour of "specialists" directing policy and being invested in government, instead of democratically elected politicians. The Committee of Imperial Defence was

the first significant manifestation of this trend in British politics and the Milnerite Imperial Federalists supported it as an embryonic "*Cabinet of the Empire*".

Balfour made the CID into a regular department of state with a permanent secretariat composed of Army and Navy representatives. The idea behind this was to protect it against future Liberal Ministers who might wish to divert it from its work or run it down. But Balfour need not have worried on this score because the Liberal Imperialists, Haldane and Grey, were given the key Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs in the new Cabinet by Campbell-Bannerman as the price for Party unity in defence of Liberal Free Trade.

The Liberal Imperialists took from their mentor, Lord Rosebery, a conviction that Foreign Policy should be 'continuous' and not be affected by party politics. They availed of the Committee of Imperial Defence established by Balfour to ensure that continuity was achieved and foreign policy did not come under the influence of the wider structures of government or the wider democracy.

Although Balfour, a Tory Unionist, facilitated England's strategic reorientation, it was the Liberal Imperialists who actually implemented it and the Liberal administration that gave substance to the ending of the traditional English alliance with Prussia. When the CID was established, in 1902, it took it that Britain's main rival in Europe was France and it had to be redirected to view Germany as the enemy.

The CID began to entertain the idea of the employment of the British Army with the former French enemy within a year of the 1904 Anglo-French Entente. The French logically interpreted the agreement as the opening of the door to a military understanding aimed at fighting a war against Germany. Colonel Repington was the unofficial agent between the two countries in the last year of the Unionist Government and details of his discussions with the French General staff are given in his book *'The First World War, 1914-18'*. The book was published in 1920, when the war that had just ended was more generally known as the Great War. Obviously, Repington believed there was going to be a sequel.

The French were worried that the fall of the Balfour Government and its replacement with the Liberals might mean that the Entente would not be followed through with the concrete military arrangements that they had hoped for. So just before the 1906 General Election, Repington went to see Sir Edward Grey to sound him out about the continued support of a future Liberal Government for the contingency plans that had begun to be made with the French for a war with Germany.

These plans, which were at that time under discussion with the French military, included the landing of a British Army of more than 100,000 men in France; simultaneous attacks by British and French forces on Germany's African colonies; and the division of captured German ships between the two navies. The view was that the British should command the sea campaign and the French, the land. As a result of this the French concentrated their navy in the Mediterranean so that the Royal Navy could be redeployed in force to the North Sea to blockade Germany. This division of labour was made for no other reason than to prepare for war on Germany and the plans were later revealed in the French newspaper, *Le Figaro*.

Grey reassured Repington of his support for the arrangements, whilst maintaining that the open policy of the Liberal Government could only be that of 'benevolent neutrality'. The Liberals were going to the country on a programme of peace and could not declare themselves involved in anything more than a peaceable 'understanding' with the French in the *Entente Cordiale*. The French were informed that contingency plans would be strictly technical and would not formally commit the two Governments. So what subsequently existed was much more than a formal military alliance. It was a secret military plan of action, which, gave Britain the freedom of action to pick its occasion to put its plans into operation, or not, when the circumstance arose.

In opposition, Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal leader, had opposed the establishment of the CID as a dangerous undermining of democratic control of war and foreign policy and he defined the policy of his party as "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform". But whilst this was the open policy, another covert one began to operate behind the scenes, even behind the back of the cabinet which the Liberal leader decided not to let in on the secret. The new Liberal Prime Minister kept the CID in being, and he brought the Liberal Imperialists in the Cabinet. And they enlisted the Unionist Opposition leader, Balfour, in the secret work of the Government in preparing for war.

The CID included the "*inner cabinet*" of Asquith, Haldane, and Grey and the leading figures at the War Office and the Admiralty—although even some of the most highly placed people at the time didn't really know who was on it and what it was exactly up to. Nominally it had no control over the policy of the British State and was supposed to discuss only hypothetical situations. But in actuality it was a semi-secret body which aimed at making these hypothetical situations into a reality.

Britain and France

The 1904 *Entente Cordiale* between England and France was the first step toward building the war alliance against Germany. It was on the surface about cultural and economic relations and the settling of accounts between the two Powers but it had secret military aspects. Plans were laid out whereby British forces would fight on the left of the French in a future war on Germany. And these plans instilled in France the irredentist spirit of pursuing its territorial claim over Alsace and Lorraine with the prospect of success.

These predominantly German speaking territories had been annexed by the new German state at the end of the Franco-Prussian war. This war had been initiated by France under Napoleon III because France felt uncomfortable with a new German state to its east and set out to destroy it. The attempt misfired badly and Alsace-Lorraine as a consequence of the Prussian victory became part of the German Empire.

The two provinces eventually enjoyed a form of home rule under Germany which Redmond praised as being a much better deal than Ireland had got from England. It even amazed the Daily Telegraph in its generosity. And there was no sign of any movement within the territories demanding reunion with France. They appeared to settle down under German administration. In March 1913 the parliament of Alsace-Lorraine, elected on one-man one vote, passed a motion to warn France that it was content with its position within the German state.

But French irredentism was rekindled by Britain to bring about the Great War.

As Roger Casement noted, the British architects of foreign policy feared that France was getting over its resentment at the loss of Alsace/Lorraine, and was about to come to terms with the existence of the German state. If that had happened, there would have been an end to the British Balance of Power. So Britain re-oriented and allied itself with its traditional enemy to prevent the dying out of French irredentism over its lost Provinces. It was in the interests of the Balance of Power that a French *revanche* be preserved and European reconciliation and unity prevented.

It must have been calculated that providing the French with an ally of the calibre of Britain would have the effect of producing a massive boost to French military confidence, making the impossible seem practical. Since the war of 1870-1 Germany had grown stronger in terms of population, industry and commerce, whilst France had stagnated. If those in France who adhered to the *revanche* ever wanted to get back the lost provinces they would have to do business with Russia and England.

The 1904 *Entente Cordiale* negotiated by King Edward acting as his own foreign minister did not immediately instil confidence in France—she was still suspicious of England's motives and whether, if it came to the bit, Britain would actually support her. But Britain used the Moroccan crises of 1905 and 1911 to demonstrate its will with regard to Germany. The Germans had recognised Morocco as an independent state and attempted to show it support (the Agadir incident) before having to back down in the interests of the peace of Europe before Britain, France and Spain—who all had other plans for the country.

When Lloyd George—not known at this time as a vigorous Imperialist—issued the virtual declaration of war by Britain on Germany at the time of the Agadir incident in 1911, France realised the Liberal Government was serious. It had a massive invigorating effect on French morale and France replaced its defensive war contingencies with a plan based on an invasion of Germany and the establishment of a Rhine frontier (Plan XVII).

When the Germans made a wide sweep through Belgium in August 1914 they nearly won the war—because the French and British General Staffs had shifted the British zone of concentration further forward and to the East from its original defensive positions to anticipate the French attack and guard its offensive flank from the Germans. The initial battles of the war were all fought on German territory (The German General Staff was too conservative/defensive in its distribution of forces in the manoeuvre and did not take Schlieffen's advice to load the right wing).

Britain and Russia

An alliance with France was, by itself, of no use to England against Germany. The great prize was also an understanding with Russia coupled with the *Entente Cordiale*.

As has been noted Britain was an island nation and it was primarily a sea Power. It did not have a large army and it had been traditionally opposed to military conscription. Therefore it would have been impossible for Britain to have defeated Germany by itself. It needed and wanted the large French army and the even larger Russian army to do most of the fighting on the continent for it. The Russian Army was particularly important and it was seen to be a 'steamroller' that would roll all the way to Berlin, crushing German resistance by sheer weight of numbers.

Britain's main weapon of war and her instrument for the crushing of Germany was the Royal Navy. A British blockade of Germany could only be effective if Russia was at war with her at the same time and sealing off her supply of food from the east. If not, Germany could derive a supply of food and materials from eastern Europe and could not be crushed by the Royal Navy—despite its immense power. And even an alliance between England and France could not achieve the crushing of Germany since only one frontier could be sealed.

During the 19th century Britain's traditional enemy in Europe had been France and her traditional rival in Asia was Russia. England could have only overturned the foreign policy of a century to establish alliances with its traditional enemies, France and Russia, to encircle Germany and then avail of a war to destroy her.

W.T. Stead, the famous journalist and friend of Cecil Rhodes, was the man who most prominently called for the revolution in British foreign policy and an arrangement with Russia. He campaigned for it in books, newspapers and periodicals for twenty years. But when it was achieved he began to notice something had changed that threatened the peace, stability and security of the world which he campaigned for as a good Liberal. He described it, started to expose it and tried to campaign against it without quite putting his finger on it. And then he went to the U.S. for a speaking tour on board the Titanic.

W.T. Stead's political ambition was to bring about an alliance between England and Russia—which he felt was the only way of securing the future peace of Europe and Asia, and copper-fasten the Indian Empire. When he began writing about the subject in the 1880s Russia was Britain's number 1 global enemy in the 'Great Game'.(France was not such a threat to the British Empire because it had been largely seen off in America and Asia and did not have the population size that could potentially threaten Britain's global dominance).

'The Great Game' stemmed from the fear in London that the Russian civilizing mission in Central Asia would extend eventually into India—the jewel in the crown of the British Empire. The worry was that Britain, which was mainly a sea Power, might easily come off second best in a conflict in the interior of Asia with the vast amount of manpower that could be marshalled there by Russia.

Since the time of Peter the Great Russia had sought to obtain a sea route from the Black Sea to the Aegean and Mediterranean. Russia's northern coast was icebound, its Baltic Coast was difficult to emerge from, due to the length of passage and possible interference from other Powers, and its Siberian seacoast was too far from the important part of Russia to make it valuable as a trade route.

The Great Game involved Britain's insistence on blocking Russia's need for port facilities to ensure its economic development through maritime trade.

Russia was severely impeded in its industrial and commercial development by this when Britain was developing the global market through its navy. In a world that was being globalized by the Royal Navy, to be a world Power Russia had to become a sea Power. And it was impossible to be a sea Power with only one port and with the rest of the country's vast territory hemmed in by ice and a hostile foreign navy. It was for this reason that England fought the Crimean War in conjunction with France and the Ottoman Turks and made an alliance with Japan in 1902 that paid dividends a few years later with the destruction of the Russian fleet at Tsushima.

Russia, in the British view, was a sleeping giant and England was determined to prevent this giant exercising its potential influence by boxing it in everywhere it sought to emerge into the world—whether in the Balkans, South-East Asia or at the Straits of Constantinople/Istanbul.

On the opening pages of his 1888 book, '*The Truth about Russia*', Stead noted that Russia was the free weight in the continental Balance of Power. It was the one variable in the situation that a state might enter into relations with that would alter everything. A Franco-Russian relationship was immensely threatening to Germany and Austria and conversely a Russo-German relationship made for great security on the continent because it could prevent the possibility of an encircling alliance of Russia and France.

Bismarck had taken care of Germany's security by making a series of arrangements with Russia. He realised that there would be no general war in Europe as long as Germany and Russia maintained good relations. France had no longer the will to launch a European war by herself, having tried and failed in 1870/1. And England, primarily a naval Power, could do nothing substantial to threaten Germany on the continent without obtaining the hired help of Russia.

Bismarck's wise policy gave time for the new German State to bed in and develop over three or four decades. And he reinforced this situation into the mid-1880s through the alliance of the Three Emperors—*Dreikaiserbund*—and then the Reinsurance Treaties. But Germany's development within the protection of the Dreikaiserbund and the Reinsurance Treaties was the thing that became problematic for Britain. When Bismarck was forced out and Kaiser Wilhelm II took over the reins of state things started to go wrong. The Kaiser failed to renew the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia in the late 1880's and this allowed France to make an alliance with Russia in 1894, ironically, due to fear of a developing German/British understanding, under Lord Salisbury.

Stead correctly noted that the German/Austrian alliance, that subsequently admitted Italy, (which he called the "*Peace League*"), was a fundamentally defensive one to counter any potential Franco-Russian one. Stead saw France as the loose-cannon in the situation on the basis that its irredentism over Alsace-Lorraine meant she might be procured against Germany to disturb the peace of Europe. And he thought that an alliance between Russia and England—which would also include Germany—would be a great force for the peace and stability of Europe.

Stead called for the British foreign policy to be revolutionised and revolutionised it was—but with the polar opposite consequence of what Stead anticipated.

In Grey's 1907 Agreement with Russia, England made a settlement of frontier disputes in Asia favourable to the Tsar. Britain agreed not to make Afghanistan a British protectorate and drew up with Russia a scheme of spheres of influence in the Persian Gulf. The Liberal Government's agreement with Russia earmarked the Southern part of Persia for Britain, assuring communication between England and Mesopotamia and domination of the Persian Gulf, as an extension to British India. And a neutral zone of mainly desert, which it was pretended was an independent Persian state, was left as a buffer state between Russian and British interests.

The Command of the Seas

The most important factor in the increasing English hostility to Germany was the German decision to build a navy to protect its growing commercial interests in the world. Between 1907 and 1914 this was the issue that dominated relations between England and Germany.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, England was the supreme maritime Power and the Royal Navy was the greatest military force in the world, which guaranteed that England was impregnable and that all its wars could be fought through choice or interest, rather than through defence or necessity. England had emerged from the Napoleonic wars in complete command of the sea. No other nation seriously thought of disputing its naval supremacy. The command of the world market, the position of its overseas Empire and the power of expanding it, inevitably followed as a matter of course.

Britain's global system of Free Trade to supply the industrial masses of British capitalism with cheap food forced the other industrializing powers to follow the British example. Germany became highly dependent on its imports of foreign raw materials and food stuffs—a fact noted by the British Admiralty and a number of political writers in England. Germany depended on its trade for its prosperity and it could only maintain its standard of living by protecting its trade. The necessary development in German naval capacity parallel to its commerce and trade was entirely understandable. But that is where it ran into the problem with England.

A group of writers on the editorial staff of the *Manchester Guardian*, including W.T. Arnold and C.E. Montague, began to write anti-German propaganda at the same time as Leopold Maxse. Arnold went on to produce articles for the *Spectator* and in 1903, a book entitled, '*German Ambitions: As They Affect Britain And The United States*' in which he advocated the blockading of Germany into starvation by the Royal Navy, to ensure England's commercial supremacy in the world. Like Maxse's *ABC etc*. articles this was not the obsession of a crank but the popularising of the policies of the British state:

> "Germany has become dependent upon sea-borne trade. Her own harvest no longer feeds her.... From every point of view we come round to the same conclusion. Germany is absolutely dependent on foreign trade, and that trade cannot be regarded as secure unless protected by a great fleet… An effective blockade of her Northern ports, coupled with a war on her East and West frontiers, would mean it would be impossible for Germany to feed herself, or to pay for food, supposing she could get it. The gains of the last twenty-five years would be lost… and England would regain her old position of trade-supremacy..." (pp. 6-7.)

Writing to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Reginald McKenna, in December 1908, Rear Admiral Sir Charles Otley, Secretary to the Committee Imperial Defence assured him that the policy of blockading Germany had been

> "constantly under investigation... The geographical position of this country and her preponderant sea power combines to give us a certain and simple means of strangling Germany at sea... The mills of our sea power (though they would grind the German industrial population slowly perhaps) would grind them 'exceedingly small'—grass would sooner or later grow in the streets… and widespread death and ruin would be inflicted." (*The Scaremongers*, p.278.)

England started building its revolutionary Dreadnought Ships at double the rate of the other nations. The Two-Power Standard or "*Two keels to one*" was the British policy, enshrined in the Naval Defence Act of 1889, to maintain a capacity greater than the next two strongest naval Powers. Prior to the Boer War the Two-Power Standard had related to the French and Russian fleets but since the turn of the century it was based on the capacities of the German and American navies. When Germany began constructing a navy the Admiralty wished to lay down a Three-Power Standard, but the Liberal Government baulked at such expenditure.

In 1910 Germany had the smallest navy of any of the great Powers and only half the number of Dreadnoughts that England, Japan, or the United States possessed. Between 1900 and 1913 England spent £480 million on her navy; France spent £200 million; Russia spent £173 million and Germany spent £248 million. (See Charles James O'Donnell, '*The Irish Future With The Lordship Of The World*', pp. 186-201, for an analysis of the respective strengths of the navies of the great Powers.)

Although Germany was building warships at a rate no faster

than laid down in its own Naval Law of 1901 a barrage of propaganda was kept up in Britain about the danger from German naval expansion. This was produced right across the political spectrum from Liberal Imperialists to Unionists and socialists. The most influential socialist of the time in Britain, Robert Blatchford, of '*Merrie England*' and *The Clarion* fame, wrote a series of articles for the Tory *Daily Mail* demanding conscription, a million man army and a bigger navy to face down the German threat. They were subsequently collected in a penny pamphlet of nearly 2 million copies.

The naval scares and panics induced a general fear across the country about German invasion. Books like Erskine Childers' '*Riddle of the Sands*' and other yarns about German conquest of England became immense best sellers. And in this climate Grey and his colleagues bullied the Gladstonian section of the Party, which was anti-war and anti-spending, into agreeing to pay for the arms race.

Britain's continental army

The establishment of a 100,000 strong British Expeditionary Force that would fit onto the French left in a future war against Germany is further evidence of England's intentions in the decade before its Great War.

Asquith's Liberal Imperialist colleague, Richard Haldane's autobiography reveals that immediately after the Liberal Government came to office in 1905 he was expressly instructed to go into the question of providing British troops for continental service. This was contingent upon "the assistance of Russian pressure on the eastern frontier" of Germany for a war in which France, Russia and England were going to engage. A complete refashioning of the British army was then effected, not only in Great Britain but in her self-governing Dominions.

Haldane at the War Office from 1906 introduced something which had not existed before—the organisation of the British army on a specific war plan for a particular situation so that there was no necessity to change its organisation on the occasion of war.

It was a contingency which had never previously been required by Britain (used as it was to fighting colonial wars in different areas of the world), that demanded a great deal of improvisation. Britain's military machine was always designed as a fighting force required for use in conjunction with its interests across the globe, and not for the European mainland.

It was always its spare capacity which took on any European intervention that might be required. Now it directed its main effort towards creating a British war machine to fulfil a specifically continental objective.

Under Haldane's supervision, Sir Henry Wilson, Director of Military Operations on the General Staff, and Commandant Foch, of the French Army, organised the military preparations over a period of eight years, which, when war broke out in Europe enabled the British Expeditionary Force to be put on the left flank of the French army in prearranged positions within two weeks of the declaration of war. Wilson prepared for this war by going over the ground, on which it was to be fought over and over again, on his bicycle.

The smallness of the British Expeditionary Force is beside the point. Its main purpose was one of morale and a convincing of the French that England had warlike intentions to the extent that it would demonstrate a commitment to continental warfare that it had never done before. After engaging with the French in military conversations Britain had to convince its new ally that it would play its part in a continental war on Germany and not just leave them to do the fighting.

Haldane did not just create a fighting force for France, he created military structures in Britain to back up that force and provide for its expansion. A great propaganda campaign was launched to win recruits and popular discussion of military affairs was fostered outside of the British Army for the first time in English history. As part of this general popularising of military affairs, Colonel Repington organised a series of lectures to the Aldershot Military Society that were published in popular format in the Aldershot Military Society Pamphlet series.

The notion of an "armed nation" had first been floated by Lord Salisbury to the Primrose League during the South African War when the British Army was coming out second best to the hardy Boers. Haldane, the Liberal Imperialist, took it up and the regular army began to take on the character of a cadre force which, when the occasion arose, was able to shape large quantities of enthusiastic recruits into the ranks. The Territorial Army that Haldane set up was not a home defence force, meant to repel an invasion. It was, as Haldane said in the Commons on 8 March 1906, "a skeleton organisation... behind the strike force with the certainty of the power of expansion".

Haldane encouraged private individuals to join in military training and organisation. There was the rapid establishment and growth of the Home Counties Gun Clubs and an effort to develop the military abilities of the masses. A collection of voluntary organisations founded and funded by the middle and upper classes, with patrons and subscribers from right across the Party spectrum, former proconsuls, and senior Army and Navy officers, directed and paid for a formidable propaganda machine, and worked on the lower orders. Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking, established his Boy Scouts in 1908 to "harden the nation" and build up a "self reliant, energetic manhood" to populate and defend the Empire, so that it would not go the way of Rome. They got uniforms, with bush hats and bandanas, modelled on Cecil Rhodes' troopers in South Africa, and had 100,000 members by 1910. There were also the Boys Brigade and the Girl Guides as adjuncts to this popular militarisation.

Before these innovations the aristocracy and gentry would not have judged it expedient to encourage the masses in the arts of war. England had chosen to fight its many wars with mercenaries, both native and foreign, and with foreign as well as British armies. But in 1906 it was clear that the masses were trustworthy enough to be trained in things military—having been won over from class conflict by being given a stake in the project of Greater Britain and having been convinced that their social lot was bound up with the fortunes of the expansionist Imperialist state.

But despite Haldane's revolution many prominent Unionists believed this was not enough for a war on Germany. The principles on which the British military system stood began to be publicly challenged by advocates of a conscripted national army, particularly by Lord Robert's 35,000 strong *National Service League*. Lord Robert's book '*A Nation In Arms*', published in 1907, was a national bestseller.

However, the British State had a long-standing prejudice against conscription and the formation of a national army—something which was very much the norm in continental Europe. It was believed that the country had done very well without the necessity of a conscript army; it had no land frontiers to protect and the most powerful navy in the world to defend its island; it had a reserve army of labour amongst the unemployed which provided cannon-fodder on the cheap, and native armies who were moulded into Imperial forces by English officers; and it made allies with those who possessed powerful armies and who

could be got to do most of the fighting. And, of course, there was the traditional affectation of British moral superiority over the continental states, which came from making do with its non-conscript army.

Haldane knew that the Liberal-dominated Parliament would not give him the money required to fund a conscript army. And the General Staff themselves rejected the idea when they considered the merits of it against having a smaller professional body. Haldane's way of making up the military deficit proved the only acceptable one in the circumstances.

The result of the popularising of the military spirit in English society was that in 1914 Britain was able to sustain a war effort on an unprecedented scale for two years without having to resort to conscription. There was no question of Britain being unprepared for the war it had been organising, planning and making provision for diplomatically, socially and militarily for the best part of a decade.

It is suggested by some historians that the smallness of the British Army showed the unpreparedness for the war (and a lack of responsibility for it). However, the point is that the size of the British Expeditionary Force was beside the point. The purpose of the Great War was to secure the demise of a growing commercial rival at the greatest advantage to Britain and the least cost to it. The French and Russians were to do the continental fighting as part of the encirclement of Germany: If they suffered in performing this role all the better for England. It was they whom Britain had to deal with once Germany was destroyed. That was the nature of the Balance of Power mentality and it is shown by what Britain did to France after it had won the war.

Britain provided its Navy, the greatest military force in the world, for the encirclement and destruction of Germany. Its Navy could capture trade and markets that armies could not. Through it Britain secured the maximum gains at the least cost to its blood and treasure.

Britain could grab territory around the world while the French and Russians had to defend their frontiers if things went wrong. In the worst case Britain could abandon the continent if it had a smallish military commitment (as it did in 1940). It could fight on with its Navy and conclude a peace if necessary leaving its allies in the lurch.

But three things went wrong with this traditional approach: The Germans were more resilient and resourceful than was anticipated; the Liberals (and Redmondites) made the Balance of Power war into a moral crusade to justify their fall from Gladstonian principles; and Asquith appointed Kitchener to the War Office with the result that those who held the Conscriptionist position favouring a large war of attrition controlled the waging of the war.

And so the small BEF of the Liberal Imperialist war plan became a massive continental commitment of a million man army.

Encirclement of Germany

With France and Russia procured as allies by Britain, its expeditionary force organised and the battlefield planning done, and the Royal Navy prepared for the job in hand, Germany was encircled by land and sea.

A few years ago when I was writing '*Ireland's Great War on Turkey*', it occurred to me to ask the question why Russia was fighting in the Great War at all. That is a question that is not asked very often and if it is little is said about it, beyond vague statements concerning Serbian/Slavic honour, treaty obligations to France, and concern for Russia's status as a great Power.

It is taken for granted that Russia should want to fight Germany because it was part of an alliance that did its duty against her. But that explains very little.

It might be pretended that Russia had territorial desires in Eastern Europe in relation to the Austro-Hungarian State in Austrian Galicia.

Galicia mattered because the salient that was Russian Poland looked exposed by having East Prussia to the North and Austrian Western Galicia (Cracow etc.) to the South. It was one of those extensions of Empire that often felt vulnerable unless territory around it was added to protect it. But then more territory had to be added to protect the new territorial acquisition and so on, in infinitum. That was how empires developed almost a mind of their own in their expansion and expansionist wars were seen as defensive necessities.

But Austrian Galicia is a poor excuse for participation in a war that threw everything into the balance. And so something else needed to be promised to the Czar for his help in steamrolling the Germans. As a consequence therefore Grey prepared the way for the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the presenting of the great prize of Constantinople to the Czar in return for an alliance ultimately aimed at destroying Germany.

This was a true revolution in Britain's foreign policy that was to give the future war a more global dimension by throwing the great Ottoman Empire into the mix of Britain's Great War on Germany.

The policy that Britain had adopted was the policy of encirclement or as the Germans called it, *Einkreisungspolitik*. It started with the *Entente* with France in 1904 and was completed when Grey successfully negotiated the Anglo-Russian agreement as Foreign Secretary in 1907. From then onwards Britain, France and Russia placed an ever-tightening noose around Germany's neck.

If one places oneself in Germany's shoes, how was this to be interpreted? Grey might have assured Germany that he was only wishing to confine her to her current territories and on England's part it was a purely defensive measure. But even if that reassured Germany (and it was actually part of Grey's strategy to lure Germany into a false sense of security) what was she to make of France and Russia's intentions with their large armies on her borders?

France was looking to recover Alsace and Lorraine and Russia was an expansionist state of gigantic proportions on Germany's Eastern flank. Even if Britain was reluctant to engage in the strangling of Germany with the other two, could it be relied upon to stay out of a conflict begun by them? That was the problem that increasingly confronted Germany until in August 1914 it became intolerable after the mobilisations.

Can Germany really be called the aggressor in 1914 when it went through a part of Belgium to break France, before Russia mobilised and England threw in her substantial weight, in order to cut the noose that was about to strangle her?

The Disarming of Dissent

Suspicions began to develop within the British democracy about what was secretly afoot as people began to put two and two together.

In a March 1911 Commons debate over spiralling naval estimates John Dillon of the Irish Parliamentary Party exposed the great secret of Liberal Imperialist Foreign Policy and where it was leading.

After noting in his speech that the Two Power Standard had been invented against Russia and France, he brought up the

awkward fact that there had been an *entente* with France and an agreement with Russia which should logically have meant the abandonment of the Two Power Standard in the light of the treaties with the two Powers it was directed against. But instead there was no diminution of armaments but the calling for a three Power Standard, against the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy. This was despite the fact that the Austrians had a minute navy and the Italian navy was being constructed by British firms.

Dillon suggested that the logic of this was that Britain proposed to fight the Triple Alliance single handed, something that clearly contradicted the alliances that had been made. And he said that there was a very uneasy feeling in the House of Commons that there were indeed secret alliances in existence behind the back of Parliament.

Arthur Lee, the Unionist spokesman on naval affairs, denied that there was any secret formal alliance. And it was not seen as peculiar that he was replying for the Liberal government!

In 1905, when a Lord at the British Admiralty, Lee had said in an after-dinner speech that he would have no hesitation in destroying the German Navy before even bothering to declare war. And it was common knowledge in Royal Navy circles that Admiral Fisher intended to "*Copenhagen*" the German fleet—a reference to the Royal Navy bombardment of Copenhagen and the destruction of the neutral Dutch fleet in 1807 without warning. The original spirit of the "Pirate Empire" was still strong at the British Admiralty. (It must be said that Jackie Fisher's proposal to "Copenhagen" the German fleet to nip German development in the bud had a lot going for it. But it seems that the German Navy was not the main problem for Britain. There was the need for a Great War to fully realise the Imperial objectives.)

The important point in Dillon's intervention was that, after the alliances constructed with France and Russia, the Two-Power Standard was really inapplicable and should no longer have been justifiable. The understandings with Russia and France gave the *Triple Entente* a battleship strength of four times that of Germany. But the Liberal Party did not see it this way because they did not know—or did not want to know—that the understandings were, to all intents and purposes the alliances of a war coalition. So Dillon's incisive questioning of the need for soaring naval expenditure was not taken up and no opposition of real consequence emerged within the Liberal Party to what was being done.

There is a clue to why this was in Dillon's speech. Dillon referred to "a dominant issue" which prevented more vigorous opposition being mounted to the naval estimates—the Parliament Act, which was to open the way for Home Rule by curtailing the powers of the House of Lords. There was a general drawing together of the disparate elements within the Liberal Party, and an Irish Party acquiescence, which enabled the Liberal Imperialist coterie to get their way. And this process of doing nothing which would in any way weaken or discredit the Government accelerated with the introduction of the Irish Home Rule Bill soon afterwards in 1912.

After the Agadir incident in Morocco which nearly led to a conflict with Germany Dillon intervened in another debate in the House of Commons. It was clear that he realised the enormity of the developing situation and the secrecy that was still attached to a vital issue that had nearly caused a war:

> "We have heard a good deal to-night of the secrecy of the foreign policy of this country. It is no use attempting to deny it. Those of us who have been a long time in this House and can remember the methods of the Foreign Office twenty-five years ago, know as a fact, which cannot be denied, that the Foreign Office has become, during the last ten years, progressively more secret every year… For ten years the foreign policy of this country has been conducted behind an elaborate scheme of secrecy. Some of us pointed out years ago that the secrecy of foreign affairs was the inevitable and logical result of that new departure which was heralded about ten years ago. I refer to what is known as the policy of the continuity of the foreign policy of this country and of the withdrawal of the foreign policy of this country from the sphere of party politics." (Cited in E.G. Jellicoe, 'Playing the Game', pp.84-5.)

Dillon's intervention illustrates what a very good grasp he had of the "continuity of foreign policy" and the dangerous situation that was developing, as a result of the Liberal Imperialist secret planning. And during 1911 Dillon criticised British foreign policy on a number of further occasions in the Commons.

Dillon was well informed, but he was the only Irish member with any interest in world affairs. Redmond's horizon in the world was the British Empire and he took his reading of foreign policy from the British—and only objected to the Imperial policy because Ireland was not an active part of it.

But Dillon's warnings fell on deaf ears as the Irish Party/Liberal alliance drew together against the Unionists in the conflict over Home Rule Bill. And then it finally became impolitic of him to say any more as the Home Rule Bill became dependent for its implementation on the support of the Liberal Imperialists at the head of the government.

Senior members of the Cabinet like Morley, Loreburn and Lloyd George only became aware of the contingency planning for war in November 1912, when Grey finally revealed the conversations with the French General Staff to the Cabinet. But they were kept on board by Grey's argument that the conversations were conditional and non-binding in character. While the pacifist element in the Cabinet were left to feel that they had achieved something by preventing an obligatory alliance with the French military from taking place, Grey gained the Cabinet's consent to what was actually taking place. And this was communicated immediately to the French—who realised the importance of this in removing the potential situation of half the British Cabinet being only made aware of the war plans of their government on the eve of war, and a revolt occurring at the decisive moment. And, it also had the great advantage of enabling Henry Wilson and the military contacts with the French to feel securer in their plans and be able to develop them more fully in the knowledge that they would not be found out by an outraged Cabinet and suddenly disowned.

Once the Home Rule struggle developed Liberal criticism of Grey ceased and the desire to probe his secret dealings and arrangements ended. The Gladstonian Liberals acquiesced to Grey's foreign policy through party loyalty in the intensifying struggle with the Unionists that culminated in the near civil war over Irish Home Rule.

The Gladstonian Liberals were in the same trap over foreign policy as the Irish Party were in over Home Rule, in relation to the Liberal Imperialist leadership. If they voted against the Government they brought all their desired social reforms down with it and let the Unionists in—and everything was thrown away. So they supported the Liberal Imperialist war expenditure on the "better the devil you know basis"—not realising they did not know the devil at all.

What greatly facilitated war in 1914 was the peculiar nature of British politics between 1912 and 1914. The Liberal Imperialist leaders of the Government utilised the Tory and Press attacks on

them to beat down their own Radicals and get their own way. In the same way they diverted the Gladstonian anti-war element by letting them have their way against the Tories in the domestic sphere whilst they procured unusual allies to the cause in the Irish Party through the Home Rule struggle.

And once the Home Rule fight was joined, the Irish Party settled into a passive contentment with Imperial foreign policy so that by August, 1914 the Irish Party had become a virtual annex of the Liberal Party. Having gone the whole way on Home Rule together, Redmond and his colleagues were in the pockets of the Liberal Imperialist coterie and then proceeded to act as an instrument of them in doing down the English Radical opposition to the Imperialist war on Germany.

Gallant Serbia

Serbia served as the detonator for the Great War.

In 1908 the multi-national empire of Austro-Hungary had annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, and this event formed the basis of conflict with Serbia—which was being encouraged by Russia in its expansionist ambitions to incorporate all Serbs into a Greater Serbia.

Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina had both been part of the Ottoman Empire but by 1878 they had become independent. Bosnia-Herzegovina had a mixed religious population of Orthodox and Catholic Christians and Moslems. The territory was claimed by the Serb nationalists and to prevent a Serb takeover of the area the Hapsburgs occupied it at the time of the Congress of Berlin in 1878, with the agreement of Britain and Russia. The reasoning behind the acceptance of Austria's protectorate was that the mixed population of Croats, Serbs and Moslems would be best administered by a powerful state that had the experience of reconciling these elements together effectively.

The Austro-Hungarians presumed that the incorporation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 would be a matter of routine. The Austrian rule of thirty years was generally accepted as progressive across Europe, Bosnia-Herzegovina had a liberal and representative diet containing all the communities, the territory was stable, and the transition between protectorate and annexation was a common British and French policy of the time. And Bosnia would have remained with good and stable government if it had been a part of the reforming Hapsburg State in a region where the Ottoman State also revived under German assistance. It would have simply transferred from one multi-national state to another with the experience of handling regions of mixed nationalities.

But Vienna miscalculated on account of the return of Russian expansionism to the area: The fact was that Russia had turned her eyes back to the Balkans as an area for expansion as a result of being blocked from an outlet to the ocean in the Middle and Far East—by Britain in Persia and Britain's ally, Japan, in the war of 1905. And the Anglo-Russian understanding of 1907 had removed the main barrier toward Russian expansion in the Balkans.

The effect of this latter factor was seen almost immediately. Russia had had a secret agreement with Austro-Hungary from May 1897 to preserve stability in the Balkans. But this was undermined by the 1907 Agreement between England and Russia. In January 1908 the Austrians obtained a concession from the Sultan at Istanbul to conduct survey work on a railway line across a strip of territory between Serbia and Montenegro. Over the previous decade this would have presented no difficulty to the Russians but in the circumstances of the 1907 Agreement with England the Austrian railway began to be seen as a German attempt to link up with the Railway being built from Constantinople to Baghdad.

To M. Bogitshevich, the Serbian *Charge d'Affaires* in Berlin, England's attitude to the annexation was a real eye-opener. He noted in his book *'Causes of the War'* (p.25) that England had assured the Austro-Hungarians of its entire support at the Congress of Berlin with regard to incorporating Bosnia in its empire but in 1908 changed its position entirely. It not only supported the Greater Serbian nationalists but also was putting pressure on the Russians to take a more uncompromising attitude to Vienna.

The British interest in the area had changed completely. Previously, the British desire to prevent Russia coming down to Constantinople by blocking her in the Balkans had produced a stabilising influence in the region by curbing Russian expansionism and holding Serbian ambitions in check.

At the Congress of Berlin in 1878 England had nullified the gains that Russia thought she had made in her war with Turkey (1877-8) and which had been agreed at San Stefano. The frustration of Russia was directed, not however against Britain but, against Austria-Hungary because she gained territorially in the Balkans at the expense of the Ottomans and began to successfully integrate the Southern Slavs into her state rather than the Slavs becoming the beneficiaries of Russian expansionism. So when Britain removed her block on Russia in 1907, as part of the preliminaries for war on Germany, all the Russian antagonism became directed at Vienna—as England hoped. As M. Bogitshevich noted "The Russo-Austrian antagonism was the inducing cause of the European war." (*Causes of the War*, p.5.)

Bogitshevich's book is interesting for another reason. The Serbian reveals how much his country was indebted toward Austria for its existence. At the time of the Congress of Berlin Austria took Serbia 'under her wing' and won for it territory that Russia had already assigned to Bulgaria at San Stefano. Again in 1885 after the war between Serbia and Bulgaria the Austrians checked the advance of the Bulgarian forces into Serbia.

From the 1880s the Russians intrigued to gain influence in Serbia but it was not until 1903 that St. Petersburg managed to detach Serbia from its friendship with Vienna. King Alexander and his wife were assassinated in an army coup and were replaced by King Peter. King Peter was a strong Francophile who had been brought up and educated in France and had even fought in France's army in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1.

France had gone into alliance with Russia after the Kaiser failed to renew the reinsurance treaty with the Czar. Under the weak and Francophile new King Peter the Greater Serbian Radicals took charge of foreign affairs in Serbia and gravitated toward Russia and against Austria. Thus began a great Serbian propaganda offensive against the Austrians that aimed to sow seeds of discontent amongst all Slavs living within the Austro-Hungarian state at the very time that their formal representation was being advocated in a 'Triple Monarchy.'

England's reorientation in 1907 altered its policy from preventing Russia from expanding its influence in the Balkans to support for Russian and Serb expansionism. However, Britain still found it necessary to block Russia advancing her objectives in the Balkans diplomatically and in agreement with the Austro-Hungarians. British strategy required hostility between Russia and Vienna so that Russia would welcome war with Vienna's ally, Germany, when a favourable opportunity for it came about..

The first fruit of the reorientation of British foreign policy and the re-alignment in the Balkans was the Balkans War of 1912 which resulted in the rolling back of Ottoman authority in the region. The war resulted from Russia bringing Bulgaria and

Serbia together, and an Anglo-Irish adventurer (James Bourchier) helping to add the Greeks to the mix to form the Balkan League. In this way the former antagonistic elements of the region were assembled (with nods and winks from London) to disrupt the stability of the region and throw it into the melting pot—where it has largely been ever since.

Bogitshevich has some interesting material in the Appendices of his book. It is clear from many Serbian documents dating from 1908 that it was common knowledge that the *Entente* Powers were planning a war against Germany and Serbia was advised to hold back in any action against Austria until the time was right for war (rather than be disowned as an aggressor and be left high and dry). In 1912 a Serbian Minister advised the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not to push for an outlet for land-locked Serbia to the Adriatic as yet but to "await with as great a degree of preparedness as possible the important events which must make their appearance among the Great Powers." (p.98.)

Austria-Hungary and Russia had reached an understanding that if Russia was supported by the Hapsburg State in her desire to have free passage through the Straits for her navy the Russians would not object to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. But when the Russian Minister informed the British and French of the agreement they found the *Entente* objecting to it as an infringement of the terms of the Triple Alliance. Having found themselves rebuffed the Russians began to attack the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and work up the Serbs about it.

There was one other aspect that made Serbia of use to Britain—its geographic position barring the way of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway that Germany was constructing. This led to the Reverend R.G.D. Laffan assigning to Serbia the role o*f 'The Guardians of the Gates*':

> "One little strip of territory alone blocked the way and prevented the two ends of the chain from being linked together. That little strip was Serbia. Serbia stood small but defiant between Germany and the great ports of Constantinople and Salonika, holding the gate of the East… Serbia was really the first line of defence of our eastern possessions. If she were crushed or enticed into the 'Berlin-Baghdad' system, then our vast but slightly defended empire would soon have felt the shock of Germany's eastward thrust." (p.164.)

This is the aspect that linked Serbia to Germany and the Ottoman Empire and resulted in all three being caught up in Britain's Great War.

Part 2

The War on Germany

The first thing to understand in seeing Britain's Great War as a Great Fraud is how the Balkan conflict became a European war.

On 28th June 1914 a Serbian terrorist assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne in Sarajevo. The Austro-Hungarians gave an ultimatum to Serbia to arrest those responsible and repress the anti-Austrian agitators in their country.

As a political event the assassination was not altogether different to the attacks of 9/11 when the US was given free rein to deal with the great provocation that had been perpetrated against it by militants. In fact, the Serbian government was more directly implicated in the assassination in 1914 than the Afghan government was in the events of 2001.

Bogitshevich notes that although Serbia agreed to some of the Austrian demands it did absolutely nothing to satisfy Austro-Hungary's main demand of arresting those responsible for the assassination of the royal couple in Sarajevo. Serbia remained totally indifferent to what might befall her and attempted no conciliatory measures that might have brought about some sort of accord with Vienna. Why? Because she knew that the backing of Russia was there, and behind it the backing of France, and the backing of England.

After a month and failing to get a satisfactory response from Belgrade, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28th.

The Austrian-Serbian war was the only necessary war in what became a European and World War. The British press from *The Times* to the *Manchester Guardian* acknowledged this at the time and British diplomats conveyed the impression to Vienna that they fully understood its position and any action it took in relation to bringing Serbia to heel. This encouraged the Austro-Hungarians to war.

At this point Britain had the influence to make this war simply another Balkan conflict, of which there had been a number over the previous few years.

Russia threatened Austria with war if she took military action against Serbia and warned Germany to keep Vienna in check. The Tsar then began mobilizing his massive military forces.

It was judged that the Austro-Serbian conflict would serve as an occasion for activating the Franco-Russian Treaty at this point. Germany undertook to restrain the Austrians on condition that Russia and France agreed to halt their mobilisations, but pointed out to the Czar that, as an ally of the Hapsburgs, Germany would go to war if necessary on behalf of Austria. Germany sought the isolation of the Austro-Serb conflict to prevent the development of a wider European war. But the Czar refused to reassure Germany by stopping his mobilisations and thus made the impending Balkan conflict into a wider European war.

The important point in all this is that only one of Germany's opponents—Britain—had the freedom of action to stay out of this escalation once the mobilisations began, but, at the same time, it was the one Power which could determine the entire character of the conflict if it chose to participate.

Britain's activity—or non-activity—during July and August in encouraging the development of a conflict and then joining it turned it from being a purely European contest involving Germany and Austro-Hungary against Serbia, Russia and France into a conflict involving millions across the globe.

Britain's freedom of action was the major element of uncertainty in the situation that had the effect of oiling the wheels of war. During the critical few days at the end of July, Britain had in great measure the power to determine the course of events in Europe. If, it had declared its intention to commit its army in support of France that would have exerted considerable influence on German behaviour, which in turn would have greatly influenced Austria, and Austria might well have warded

off Russian mobilisation by taking a different attitude to Serbia.

Or, if Britain had declared its intention to be neutral under specified conditions, that would have influenced French behaviour in drawing back, discouraging Russia. But England did neither of these things. Instead, it gave the Germans the impression that it would remain neutral, encouraging the Kaiser to back Austria, whilst signalling to the French and Russians its intentions if they went ahead.

After Austria had declared war on Serbia both sets of alliances then eagerly made representations to Britain to determine her position. The Germans argued that if England declared it would remain neutral, France and Russia would not dare to fight. The French and Russians argued that if England declared she would side with them, Germany and Austria would at once back down.

But Asquith and Grey decided to do neither and maintained a dangerous ambiguity in Britain's position. They, instead, by their deliberate inactivity, encouraged neither side to draw back, and instead encouraged both alliances to war.

The British State, in the critical week, did not have a position that the other European states could take account of when deciding what to do. It looked like indecisiveness by British statesmen at the critical juncture and it has become customary to say that Britain drifted into the war.

But it was nothing like that at all. Asquith, Grey, Haldane and Churchill had all decided a week before the declaration of war that, in the event of a conflict occurring in Europe, Britain would take part in it. They calculated the chain of events and their drift encouraged them to occur, and then in the time-honoured fashion of the Balance of Power strategy, they entered the war as part of a military alliance against their main European rival.

It was at this point that the Anglo-French *Entente* came into its own for Grey. There were fairly tight treaty obligations existing between France, Germany, Austria and Russia, which would draw them into any war that might break out among two of the parties. Britain was the only real free agent in the situation and was not bound by treaty to join forces with France or anyone else. Its options were open and it was not under any obligation to take part in the war. Britain could afford to let a European conflict run its course and sit back and watch the territorial sorting out as a result of it, without risking any loss itself.

But it decided that the great opportunity had arrived to do down Germany and play for much higher global stakes.

The type of arrangement that Grey had constructed with France, by having no formal commitment, was open to being misinterpreted by Germany and could leave her miscalculating in this situation. A preventative open alliance, rather than the vague and semi-secret understandings, would have been sensible if England stood for peace in the world. But the Liberal Imperialists had other objectives and considerations, so during the crucial week they practised a strategic deception on the Germans that encouraged them to give strong support to Austria against Serbia on the assumption that Britain would let that situation work itself out.

The issue of Belgium

When Germany realised that a Franco-Russian attack was impending she tried to secure British neutrality in the European war, by guaranteeing, on 30th July, that she would only use Belgian territory as part of a military operation against France. And after the end of hostilities she would respect both the territorial integrity of Belgium and France.

It was essential for Germany, to avoid being assailed by massive forces on both her flanks, that she neutralise French military capabilities quickly. And the way of doing that was by taking the most direct route to Paris, through Belgium territory. Germany was aware that during the Franco-German crisis of 1887, at a time when Anglo-German relations were very different, the British press had openly and unashamedly discussed the advisability of giving the green light to the German Army to cross Belgium for the purpose of initiating military operations against France.

But could she be so sure now with the arrangements Britain had made with the French that England would maintain the same policy as in the past?

Germany was at war with Russia and knew that this meant war with France. The only unknown factor was the position of England. Germany offered Belgium friendly neutrality, and promised to maintain her independence if she would give free passage to German troops across a part of her territory. If the king of the Belgians refused Germany would have to treat his country as an enemy.

But it was vital for the Liberal Imperialists that they draw the Germans into Belgium. That would be the only factor enabling them to bring the bulk of their party—who were not predisposed to supporting Balance of Power wars—into supporting British participation in war. They knew that that was the only feasible German defensive manoeuvre to deal with its encirclement and much larger forces mobilizing on its borders.

If Asquith and Grey had told the Germans that England would declare war on them if they crossed Belgian territory the Kaiser would have thought twice and Germany would have had to back down or chance taking Paris through the French frontier. But that would have let the opportunity slip for British intervention in a very favourable conflict situation against Germany. The Liberal Imperialists needed to gain the support of the Gladstonian back benches for war, and for that it was necessary that the Germans should go through Belgium and be resisted.

When the crisis began Grey went to stay with Haldane at his residence in Queen Anne's Gate where they prepared to put their years of preparations into operation. It went off without a hitch as the British expeditionary force and reserves were fully mobilised like clockwork.

An important element in all this was the fact that the Prime Minister was his own War Minister, as a result of taking the position himself after the Curragh Mutiny. This enabled the "inner cabinet" of Asquith, Grey, Churchill and Haldane to put the state on a war footing without the knowledge of the official Cabinet. Asquith, whilst dealing with the wider issues as Prime Minister was able to give Haldane (who at that point was Lord Chancellor) a chit to take informal command of the army, using his former connections, and enact a kind of private mobilisation which made sure all his earlier plans went into smooth operation. The Cabinet refused to let Churchill call out the fleet, but "the inner cabinet" winked at the first Lord and he went ahead anyway. The British fleet—"eighteen miles of warships"—was dispatched in the early morning of 2nd August, without the knowledge of the Cabinet, to its pre-arranged war stations off the German coast as the French fleet reached its assigned stations in the Mediterranean. The mobilisation of the British fleet signalled British intentions to its partners to go full steam ahead. But Lord Grey telegraphed the Czar, through the British Embassy in Russia, just in case.

Edward Grey's speech

The trickiest problem the Liberal Imperialists at the head of the British government still faced was in bringing the bulk of

their party with them in making war on Germany. Insurance was taken out in case this was not achieved. The Liberal Imperialist "inner cabinet" opened up secret negotiations with the Unionist leaders in the week before the British declaration of war. Asquith, Grey and Haldane calculated that if they could not persuade their Liberal colleagues to go to war, they would have to enlist the Unionists in a coalition to take it on, or else resign.

Asquith's most powerful weapon against Cabinet dissent was the threat of immediate coalition government—with the people who had been threatening the Liberals with civil war over Irish Home Rule only weeks earlier.

It is very important to remember that when Edward Grey made his famous speech on 3rd August, the Germans had not entered Belgium. But formal sanction had been given by the Cabinet to the already completed mobilisation of the fleet and the immediate mobilisation of the army and reserves, although no decision had been taken to send an ultimatum to Germany, let alone declare war.

In the Foreign Secretary's report to Parliament on what he had been doing to keep the peace, Grey made it pretty clear that the Government intended to make war on Germany, in alliance with France and Russia. He described the situation as very grave, although he said there was one silver lining amongst the clouds—the situation in Ireland, where the European crisis had over-ridden the Home Rule crisis.

Grey's speech was regarded as momentous and a defining moment by those who heard it. But in its presentation of the Government's case it was fumbling and evasive and it skirted around the fundamental issue of the nature of Britain's obligation to France. The government had repeatedly told Parliament that it was entirely free of continental entanglements or obligations, which might require it to participate in a European war. And whilst Grey revealed for the first time the historical development of the military conversations that had taken place between the British and French general staffs since 1906, he stopped short of arguing that they entailed any obligation to act. However, he made an appeal to the individual consciences of the members, and the "debt of honour" to France and, he made it clear that he felt it was in the national interest that Britain should save France from defeat.

Grey's stumbling and ragged speech was mistaken for honesty and indecision at a moment of terrible choice for his audience. It successfully conveyed the impression that here was a man desperately struggling for peace against the odds, and the inevitability of British intervention. Nothing could be further from the truth but impression, rather than thought and reasoning, meant everything that day.

Bonar Law, the Unionist leader, who had been threatening rebellion over Irish Home Rule a week earlier, followed the Foreign Secretary with a speech that was really just a sentence pledging "the unhesitating support of the Opposition."

Then John Redmond, the Chairman of the Irish Parliamentary Party, made a seemingly impromptu offer to the Government "that they may take their troops away, and that if it is allowed to us, in comradeship with our brethren in the North, we will ourselves defend the coasts of our country."

Redmond's offer sounded very much like an opportunistic manoeuvre to utilise the imminence of war to head off Ulster Unionist opposition to Home Rule. What the leader of the Irish Party actually offered was that he was willing to look after Ireland, for Britain, if he was placed in armed possession of it by the Imperial Government—which was not much of a bargain, since the coasts of Ireland were 'defended' more than adequately by the Royal Navy.

Redmond's offer to defend Ireland with an alliance of his Irish National Volunteers and Carson's Ulster Volunteers against a German invasion must have sounded ridiculous as a concept and irrelevant to the immediate situation. It was so ridiculous that it was not even believed by the Commons to be what Redmond was saying. But Parliament looked at Redmond's speech with benevolence—perhaps, in relief that Ireland did not confront them in their moments of crisis, in the way it had confronted them in the last year or so. The Commons "understood" what they wanted to understand from it and "misunderstood" what they wanted to misunderstand from it. The House of Commons pretended that Redmond made an entirely different offer. And six weeks later they were proved right, when Redmond actually made the offer they understood him to have made in the Commons.

Belgium and the collapse of war opposition

It was the Opposition and Redmond who accepted Grey's case for war unreservedly—not the bulk of the Liberal Party. An important aspect of the Chairman of the Irish Party's expression of moral support for war was the effect it had on their closest allies, the anti-war Radicals in the Liberal Party. This was to be a very important factor in the making of England's Great War.

In the week leading up to the Foreign Secretary's report in the Commons and on the day after, before war was formally declared, there was substantial Liberal opposition to British intervention in a European conflict. C.P.Scott edited the Manchester Guardian for nearly forty years. The *Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily News*, edited by A.G. Gardiner, and H.W. Massingham's *The Nation*, were the major newspapers of the Liberal Party, and they insisted on British neutrality.

C.P.Scott was very close to Dillon, who was himself opposed to the war. The moral collapse of the Gladstonian Liberal position in August 1914 and Dillon's failure to take a stand against Redmond's support for the war are charted in C.P. Scott's *Diaries* and the correspondence he had with Dillon during those crucial weeks. Although this is of the utmost importance and is of great historical relevance, Irish historians have shown no interest.

Scott knew that the Liberal Imperialists had manipulated the Liberals into a war situation. The *Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily News* and the other Liberal organs were forthright in their condemnation of Grey's foreign policy and declared that it would have been just and prudent and statesmanlike for England to remain neutral.

The *Manchester Guardian* was aware of the probability of Germany going through Belgium to see off France and the use that would be made of this to enlist Britain into war. So on August 1st, it gave the following history of the so-called treaty with Belgium:

> "… we are to side with Russia against Germany because we are guarantors of the neutrality of Belgium, which, it is assumed, is in danger from Germany, and from her alone. The *Times* has quoted the authority of Gladstone for this proposition. Now it is quite true that during the Franco-Prussian War Lord Granville concluded treaties with both France and Germany guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium. Article 3 of both treaties declares that they are to remain in force during the continuance of the war and for twelve months afterwards. Both treaties have therefore expired.
>
> "But it will be said there are the earlier treaties of the forties in which we, in common with most of the Great Powers, guaranteed Belgian neutrality. Are we not bound by those? Let the great Lord Derby answer for us. He was asked in 1867

whether we were not bound by a similar collective guarantee in the case of Luxembourg. He said No: "We were bound in honour—you cannot place a legal construction on it—to see in concert with others, that these arrangements are maintained. But if the other Powers join with us it is certain that there will be no violation of neutrality. If they, situated exactly as we are, decline to join, we are not bound single-handed to make up the deficiency. Such a guarantee has obviously rather the character of a moral sanction to the arrangements which it defends than that of a contingent liability to make war. It would no doubt give a right to make war, but would not necessarily impose the obligation.

"And that is the view taken by most international lawyers. We are, therefore, absolutely free; there is no entanglement with Belgium. Is any further argument needed? It is supplied by the fact that Belgium herself does not desire our interference. If we landed an army for the defence of Belgium it would be fired upon by the Belgians. Belgium does not aspire to the distinction of being the cockpit of Europe."

The Belgian 'treaty' that the Liberals insisted on honouring to engage in war on Germany was not a treaty with Belgium but a treaty about Belgium. Britain itself breached the treaty by negotiating with Belgium about what would happen in the event of Germany wanting to pass an army through the country. And the Germans found considerable evidence later in the Belgian archives that the Belgians had played fast and loose with their supposed 'neutrality' by entering into military discussions with Britain as early as January 1906 about how they would co-operate in a future war on Germany. So it was the case that Belgian neutrality had already been breached and would be breached subsequently, whatever the Germans did.

Walter Page, the Anglophile US Ambassador in London, in a conversation with Colonel House, President Wilson's special adviser, in September 1916, revealed that the White House also believed that Belgium neutrality was really just a canard for the British to justify a war: "we resented some of the cant and hypocrisy indulged in by the British… as to Belgium Page admitted that the British would have been found fighting with France even if France had violated Belgium in order to reach German territory more effectively." (*The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, arranged and narrated by Charles Seymour, Professor of History at Yale University, vol. 2, *From Neutrality to War 1915-1917*, p.320).

"*Poor Little Belgium*"

Like autocratic Czarist Russia, Belgium was an unlikely ally of the Liberal conscience. When W.T. Stead visited Belgium in 1888, he took it for granted that it would be implicated in any future European conflict—despite its supposed 'neutrality'.

Stead described not the "poor little Belgium" of future British war propaganda but a highly militarized society at the centre of the world's arms industry. And he made it clear that if there was a war between France and Germany an attack by either nation would have to cross Belgian territory if it was to be a success because since the Franco-Prussian War "the two Powers have been busily engaged in rendering their respective frontiers impassable, by constructing lines of fortresses against which an invading army from the other side will break its head in vain". (*The Truth about Russia*, p.2)

Belgium was also one of the most brutal and reactionary of the Imperialist powers. One of its large possessions in Africa was referred to before the war in Britain, as "*The Congo Slave State*", where the Belgians worked millions of natives to death. On account of the atrocities in the Congo, revealed in the *Casement Report*, Britain had the moral ascendancy over Belgium at this time and it used this as a means of exerting pressure in the background in relation to Germany.

Belgium was not a natural entity and was constructed by external forces, largely by Britain, to curb the French geographically on the other side of the Channel. It was a state rather than a country, made up of two distinct peoples who did not like each other. But it was kept together to serve a strategic purpose for Britain, which claimed a right of hegemony over it.

Lord Palmerston was the individual most responsible for it and he said:

> "It has been agreed by treaty that Belgium and Switzerland should be declared neutral but I am not disposed to attach very much importance to such engagements, for the history of the world shows that when a quarrel arises and a nation makes war and thinks it advantageous to traverse with its army such neutral territory, the declarations of neutrality are not apt to be very religiously respected." (E.G. Jellicoe, '*Playing the Game*', p.169.)

The Belgian treaty was worthless but Britain still exercised the right to use Belgium in the way it saw fit. And so the German defensive sweep into Belgium was used as an obligatory *casus belli* in England, when in reality it was merely the pretext for war from Britain's point of view. France proposed to send five army corps into Belgium to confront Germany, despite Belgian 'neutrality'. And Grey saw nothing wrong in that in principle (although it was very inadvisable from Grey's objective that Belgium should accept this offer, as it would negate propaganda of a German violation of Belgian neutrality.)

It was well known in Belgian governing circles that England was pursuing a secret policy of war against Germany. The Belgian state was really part of the political front against Germany and a kind of unofficial member of the *Entente*. Belgium had its own war aims of an Imperial kind—and subsequently did very well out of the spoils of victory in 1919, getting Rwanda and other African territories. Prior to 1909, the Belgian army numbered 100,000 men recruited by volunteering. In 1912 Belgium adopted a military programme raising the war strength of its army to a massive 340,000. And in 1913 the Belgian Parliament introduced the principle of universal compulsory service, in preparation to meet her obligations and responsibilities to her 'allies.'

In August 1914, '*Poor little Belgium*' was able to put a larger army in the field than Britain—despite being, according to British theory, a state with internationally guaranteed neutrality.

Churchill, with greater honesty, made it clear in his account in '*The World Crisis: 1911-1914*' that Belgium was only a secondary consideration in Britain's overall calculation to make war.

What was really a Balance of Power war was presented to the Liberal Party and the nation as an affair of honour in support of "Poor little Belgium". And British diplomacy concentrated its efforts on achieving a moral basis for war out of what was actually a case of *realpolitik*.

Churchill knew that Belgium was an exceptionally corrupt and oppressive Power and he was quite clear that the war was really about the Balance of Power. But he went along with the moral humbug, tipping his hat to the democratic age, because that is what it took to bring the Liberal Party and the nation along with him and his fellow Liberal Imperialists into the war.

In Ireland the Redmondite warmongers worked up sectarian passions in relation to what they called "Little Catholic Belgium" with the inference that it was being subjugated by Protestant Prussia. This was one of the tactics used to raise a volunteer army

termed "*the Irish Brigade*" that was really just cannon-fodder for Kitchener and his generals to sacrifice in their joint exercises in attritional warfare at the Front.

War propaganda

In August 1914, after Grey had disclosed to Parliament the nature of the arrangements he had made with others to make war on Germany, the rank and file of the Liberal Party had the choice, either to maintain its anti-war position and see its leaders join with the Unionists in a war coalition or go along with the war and war-monger with the best of them.

It chose the latter course, and to justify its moral collapse it injected the Great War with a moral character that transformed a Balance of Power war into something of an altogether more catastrophic character.

Belgium provided Grey with the means of easing the bulk of his party into war. And this is where the Irish Home Rulers were to play a vital part in tilting the balance in favour of the Liberal Imperialists within the Liberal Party. The Gladstonian Liberals found themselves deserted by their Irish allies and found England surprisingly becoming bombarded with war propaganda written from the most unlikely Irish source.

Belgium enabled Liberal England to go to war with Germany with a good conscience. And Redmond's decision enabled it to convince itself it was going to war over Belgium, when it was really going to war in its own interests, as part of its Balance of Power strategy.

Redmond and the Irish Party were indispensable to the Liberal Imperialist leaders of the Liberal Party in subduing the Gladstonian anti-war spirit within their own ranks. The Irish Party and the Liberal backbenchers had fought side by side in the battle for Home Rule over the previous four years and it was greatly demoralising for Liberals opposed to the war to see the most vigorous anti-imperialists of the past go over to the side of Imperialist war.

Dillon, who was opposed to the war, reconciled his conscience to the declaration of war. He urged support for the war as part of the struggle for Home Rule and suspended his mind about what had been done in August 1914, convincing himself that a different war was being fought than he knew to be the case. He made a pragmatic decision to go along with Redmond because he believed it paid to be on the winning side at the end of a war. If Ireland stood out against England again, like in the Boer War, and Germany was defeated quickly, the cause of Home Rule would be fatally undermined by the Irish disloyalty—after all the promises that had been made by the Irish leaders in recent years.

And so the Liberal opposition to British intervention in the war collapsed after the desertion of their Irish allies and the official British declaration of war. When the Liberal Imperialist Government declared war on Germany, the same Gladstonian Liberal newspapers which had said that England's participation in such a war would be "the greatest crime of our time" and "treason to Liberal principle," took up the position that war on Germany was an absolute moral necessity and had to be undertaken to save civilisation.

But Irish nationalists could not support British Imperial Balance of Power wars even with the Redmondite Imperial development. With the Home Rule Bill going on to the Statute Book they did not even want to believe that Liberal Britain could wage such wars anymore. They had to believe they were on the side of the fighting of a different type of war, a war in character with Britain's new found regard for small nations, like Ireland.

Once the war was a fact and discussion was at an end Irish Nationalism and English Radicalism had a similar need—to create a make-belief war that justified their support for it. The only adequate reason for the war in the Redmondite mind was that it was in defence of small nations whilst in the Radical Nonconformist mind it was a crusade against evil. And so the Irish war propagandists provided a service to Liberal England in putting their talents at the disposal of England to conjure up the proper moral frenzy required for the occasion.

The Redmondite Fraud

Redmondites like Tom Kettle and Robert Lynd in the *Daily News*, Hugh Law and L.G. Redmond-Howard in various publications joined hand in hand with the British warmongers. Kettle's '*Europe against the Barbarians*' and '*Under the Heel of the Hun*'', published by the *Daily News* on August 5th were typical of the Irish anti-German war propaganda. This propaganda was based on fervent denunciations of "Prussianism", "German militarism", and the "gospel of hate and force", leading to a supposed Teutonic desire for world domination.

Kettle's war propaganda was collected in a book entitled '*The Ways Of War*', which was published after his death on the Western front in 1916. In it are the articles he wrote for the *Daily News* and T.P.O'Connor's *T.P.'s War Journal* in England, and the *Freeman's Journal*, *The Irish Ecclesiastical Recor*d, and the *Hibernian Journal*, in Ireland.

The Redmondite war-mongering was a great fraud on the people of Ireland (as well as the English masses who read it). It cast all blame for the war on Germany and presented the country as an aggressively militaristic society that was the personification of evil in the world.

This was nonsense. Germany was situated at the heart of Europe, with no natural frontiers, and was very prone to be the main battleground of European war. France, alone, had invaded Germany at least thirty times since the middle ages. When one takes into account geographical and historical factors the expectation should have been that Germany would have been involved in the majority of European wars.

But an examination of the statistical evidence on the comparative militarism of the European Powers since the end of the Middle Ages reveals that, far from being an aggressively military entity, Prussia/Germany was one of the most peaceful nations in Europe.

From 1480 until 1940 the relative percentages of participation by the principle European states in wars, as estimated by the American Professor Quincy Wright in his 1952 book, *A Study Of War*, was England 28%, France 26%, Spain 23%, Russia 22%, Austria 19%, Turkey 15%, Poland 11%, Sweden 9%, Netherlands 8%, Italy 9%, and Germany/Prussia 8%.

The Russian historian, Pitirim Sorokin, in his study, *Social And Cultural Dynamics*, undertook an investigation of assembled data and showed that of all the nations of Europe, Germany had the lowest percentage of years with war. England, Spain, Poland, Lithuania, Greece, France, Russia, Holland, Austria, and Italy all exceeded Germany in time spent on martial pursuits. F.Cowell published some of Sorokin's findings in '*A History Of Civilisation And Culture*' in 1953. In his book England is credited with 176 wars. Prussia/Germany, which British propaganda depicted as an essentially militarist state, is credited with a mere 24 wars.

The British military and naval historian, Captain Russell Grenfell, also made a statistical analysis of the numerical involvement in wars by the major European Powers in the century between Waterloo and the Great War. He credited

Britain with involvement in ten wars, Russia in seven, France in five, Austria in three, and Prussia/Germany in three.

Frederick the Great's attack on Austria in 1756 had the characteristics of an aggressive war. But since then Germany's wars had all been defensive wars. And that was recognised by the great English historians and thinkers such as Carlyle, Freeman, Arnold, Stubbs, Acton and Maitland. Bismarck's '*small wars*' of 1864 and 1866 pulled together the fragmented German states under pressure from the surrounding European Imperialist nation-states. They were limited in scale and definite in purpose as essential defence for survival in nationalistic Europe. When the requirement had been achieved and Germany had been defended in 1870/1 it settled into peaceful co-existence with its neighbours and Bismarck famously said that the Balkans were "not worth the life of a single Pomeranian Grenadier".

"*Prussianism*"

Britain's Balance of Power wars were conducted without regard for the social character of ally or enemy, but the moral crusade of the Great War had to be conducted against evil and that evil was defined as "*Prussianism*" in 1914.

Prussia's peculiar geographical position gave its Government a more overtly military character than England's. The Prussian military ability had its origins in the role Prussia took on of uniting and consolidating Germany. England's history was determined by her separation from, yet close proximity to, the European Continent. The determining peculiarities of Prussia's position, on the other hand, lay in the fact that she had neighbours and rivals who were immensely superior and more powerful and from whom she was only separated by boundaries which she had herself created.

The argument, that Prussia's need, because of its geographical position, to maintain a large standing army for defensive purposes, gave the state a "militaristic" disposition which predisposed it to war, was completely false. War was a very much bigger risk for Prussia, with its large standing army, than it was for Britain, with its comparatively small regular army but a gigantic navy. And the form of government of a state is no guide to its warlike character. The British State is a good example of this. The reading of British history shows that, as England became more democratic, it did not become less warlike and expansionist.

During the same period Germany strove for commercial success in the world, and not world hegemony. Only the German Empire didn't have an overseas Empire. Its 'empire' was not like the British Empire. It was primarily an Empire of Germans. Bismarck had no great desire for a "Greater Germany" to rival "Greater Britain". Germany's colonial empire never amounted to much and Bismarck gave no encouragement to the handful of Anglophile German colonial adventurers, like Carl Peters, who wanted to follow in the footsteps of Cecil Rhodes and others, and emulate Britain's Imperial enterprise in the world.

Furthermore, Germany had no aims requiring warfare for achievement. In England it was said that "trade followed the flag." But the flag was carried by means of war on those who did not want to trade on England's terms by Royal Navy gunboats. In Germany trade and war were entirely separate pursuits. Germany did very well in the world without war—too well for England. And Germany, most of all European nations, required stability in Europe to advance her commercial interests.

Germany, unlike England, did not change her alliances immediately prior to the Great War, or jockey for position, in order that a rival might be isolated. Any alliances she contemplated, or entered into, were made on the basis of maintaining the security and stability of the European continent—in order to preserve her own prosperity. In August 1914, despite what the Irish war propagandists wrote, the criminal had no motive for the crime.

It was said that Germany refused arms limitation before the war. Germany may indeed have had nothing to do with the Hague disarmament conferences of 1899 and 1907 because she would not see her defences disarmed without the corresponding political arrangements which would have guaranteed them.

But she did not arm in preparation for aggressive warfare and did not take the favourable opportunities available to her, prior to the war, by exploiting France's isolation after Fashoda in 1898, England's exposed position at the time of the Boer War, or Russia's near collapse and revolution in 1905 (after its defeat in the Japanese war, when Germany was offered an ideal opportunity to extend her power eastwards). Germany always backed down if she stood on England's toes, as during the Morocco crisis, and was only caught out in 1914 when England's intentions were kept deliberately vague and she was left with no choice in the matter.

Germany's aggressive intentions can be gauged by her military preparations prior to the war, in contrast to those of England and her allies. During the years 1905-07, prior to the Anglo-Russian Agreement, the German army was increased by only 7,000 men. In 1914 the French army was far larger than the German, proportionate to its population. The German General Staff had not updated its war plans to take into account the changing international situation; and its tactics "had become antiquated", according to the anti-German writer, J.Ellis Barker (*Nineteenth Century*, June 1912.)

The Redmondite war propaganda suggested that "prophets of war" saturated German thinking and that fanatical German nationalists were inspiring German Imperial policy to conquer Europe and expand into territories across the world. But Nietzsche, the main so-called "prophet of war" had not been less popular in England than he had been in Germany. In Germany, where, unlike England, Christianity still existed as an effective medium of life, the piously Protestant Prussian military caste and bureaucracy despised Nietzsche's anti-Christian philosophy. And he despised them, along with Bismarck's Germany—which he took to be an unproductive diversion of energies from the former cultural era. And he was one of the few foreigners who had *Collected Works* published in English translation before 1914

Tom Kettle theorised the view that Germany was infected by the incarnation of evil, Nietzscheanism, and therefore had to be destroyed, so that the world could revive to a situation of perpetual peace. And this was generally taken up in England, even though Nietzsche had condemned the German State constructed by Bismarck.

Kettle and the Irish war propagandists knew that damning German culture was a useful propagandist device for influencing the intellectual classes. But the best means of working up the masses hatred of Germany—and their support for Irish participation in England's war—was through the 'atrocity' story. The reports of German atrocities in Belgium started filling the pages of the English and Irish press in early September. Many were penned by Kettle for the *Daily News*. They were contained in reports in the "*Freeman's Journal and Daily News Special*". In one single page of the *Freeman's Journal*, on 4th September, the following headlines appeared over the first report: 'Horrors of Louvain,' 'Streets Covered With Dead Bodies,' 'Murder Of Burgomaster And University Rector,' 'Shooting Of Six Priests', 'German Cruelties, Killing Their Own Wounded,' 'A Child

Bayonetted, Horrible Mutilation' etc. etc.

In the opening phase of the war the German army was harassed behind its lines by Belgian *francs-tireurs*—who would be called "*terrorists*" today—and it responded by shooting them after drum-head court-martials, as Kitchener did to Boer commandos in South Africa.

When the Germans failed to win the war in the opening manoeuvre, they found themselves in occupation of much of Belgium. The Belgians got on with everyday life and actually prospered under the German occupation—a fact acknowledged with annoyance in *The Times* of 31 March 1917.

In contrast the over running of East Prussia by the Tsarist forces during August 1914 produced far more atrocities than the Germans ever committed in Belgium—and they were never heard of in Ireland. The German behaviour in Belgium was very civilised in comparison, and was acknowledged as such, later in the war, by newspaper owners like Lord Northcliffe and many other English observers.

The two most significant "atrocities" which the Germans were accused of were the deliberate and systematic artillery destruction of Rheims Cathedral and Louvain. The "destruction" of the Cathedral turned out to be interior damage caused by a small straw fire—and would be called "collateral" damage today. In Louvain the Belgian civil population rose up against the German force that had retired in disorder from Malines, believing a patriotic blow could be struck against the retreating Germans. There was ferocious street fighting and much of the town was badly damaged. But the Germans were guilty of nothing extraordinary in Louvain in the methods of suppression of irregular warfare behind the lines.

It was very much in the interests of Germany to wage a humane, quick, restricted and limited form of warfare in 1914 which recognised the rights of non-combatants and non-belligerents, whilst it was the determined intention of the *Entente* to launch the most inhumane, lengthy, unrestricted and unlimited campaign against Germany possible, which had no regard for the rights of the civilian and the neutral. The Royal Navy based its strategy on the blockade—that most undiscriminating of weapons of war. And of course, Britain was the pioneer of the new total war—which it had practised so effectively and successfully against the civilian population in South Africa.

The Great Moral War

Although the Liberal Imperialists might never have imagined that their objective would involve such a great commitment of resources—given the strength of the forces they were arraying against Germany in concert with Russia and France—they must have understood that what they were trying to do would certainly involve something on a scale which had never been attempted in the past, and would involve an unprecedented fight to the finish.

The virulent anti-German propaganda of the Redmondites was not only a significant factor in strengthening war sentiment in England and undermining the Radical opposition. The introduction of a strong moralising element into warfare had considerable implications for the war's scale and duration. Previous wars had been fought by England with comparative restraint, a fair degree of detachment, and minimal duplicity and deception, both on the home population and prospective allies.

The old amoral wars of the British aristocracy were called off when the strategic objective was achieved—as in the first great war of 1756-63—or it could be advanced no further. But the hysterical morality of the war "*for civilisation*" against "*Prussianism*" had the implication that the war could not be called off until "*civilisation*" was saved and "*Prussianism*" was destroyed—which could only be achieved when the German State had collapsed.

As a result, once the war got underway and mass participation in it was required to keep it going, it began to lose all strategic proportion. When the German State proved a lot more durable than anticipated, massive resources of men and material had to be employed to secure its destruction and the numerical and geographical scale of killing and destruction were increased drastically to achieve the ultimate objective. So, the war propaganda and moralising had the ultimate effect of making the war longer, the casualties greater, and radiating its effects across the globe.

England's Great War on Germany had been conceived in the minds of the English ruling elite as a Balance of Power war to see off a commercial competitor. And the European conflict was encouraged and entered into on that basis. But if that had been that it would have ended when stalemate had set in during 1915 or 1916. But because it was a war of the democratic era, initiated by the great English party of democracy, it was turned into a moral crusade. And as a result it turned into a prolonged catastrophe of monumental proportions for Europe and the world.

Redmond's War

Redmond declared support for Britain's Great War and in return the Unionists agreed that the Irish Home Rule Bill could be enacted in a formal manner and put on the Statute Book. However, it would not be actually implemented until after the War, and then with substantial amendment. Having got this the Irish Party became an active recruiter for the British Army, and urged the Volunteers to enlist. Redmond tried to have his National Volunteers organised into a kind of Irish Army, as a distinctive component of the Imperial military force, but the War Office wouldn't have it, though the Ulster Volunteer Force was permitted to organise itself into an a distinct 'Ulster' army.

The calculation that Redmond made was something like this: the war would be a comparatively short affair—lasting a year at most—because the astute statesmanship of the Liberal Imperialist Government had ensured that Germany was all but isolated and was caught between two large armies on her flanks with massive population reserves to draw upon and a Royal Navy blockade of her coasts. An Irish Parliament would then become a reality by the end of 1915, when the war would be over. At that point the Ulster Unionists would have become either reconciled to Nationalist Ireland's loyalty through its common blood sacrifice in the field, or else the Dublin Parliament's Irish army—which had been armed, trained and equipped by the Imperial government as a coherent national force—could be brought into play to prevent a reneging on the Home Rule Bill.

But Asquith conceded the War Office to the Unionists and the supporters of the Curragh Mutiny became the High Command of the army—the most important institutions of the State in wartime. The military caste that had planned the war on Germany—which was predominantly Unionist and anti-Home Rule—became the most important thing to the Government in August 1914. The army itself naturally became the most important thing in the life of the state, and as the war got going, and the democratic process was subordinated to the war effort, Unionism began to acquire both the form and the substance of political power more and more.

The British State, in order to recruit Irishmen in substantial numbers to its army, had to operate through the virtual Prime

Minister of Ireland and the virtual Home Rule government. While the Irish Leader and his Party were going up and down Ireland recruiting soldiers for an 'Irish Brigade' of the British Army and claiming that Home Rule was now a foregone conclusion, the important people in the British State were acting on the basis that there was no Irish army and no Irish Home Rule. So, although John Redmond had joined the war against the Kaiser, the British State would not permit Ireland to fight a national war with its own army against Germany and Ulster at the same time took care to conduct its war on a separate basis from Redmond's Volunteers.

The only part the War Office had allocated for Ireland in its scheme of things was its role as supplier of cannon fodder for the front. Ireland's usefulness to the War Office boiled down to how much of this cannon fodder Redmond could actually supply. And the Irish Party could only excuse their inability to provide all the Irish cannon fodder the Unionists demanded by saying that the War Office were tying their hands in recruiting. And, of course, the Unionist War Office could tie their hands to their heart's desire.

The Great War then became a contest between the two communities concerning who would raise the greater number of soldiers for England. And it was no surprise that where the two communities came face to face in Belfast the greatest and most enthusiastic recruiting was done in Catholic Ireland by Joe Devlin.

As far as Nationalist Ireland was concerned, Catholics had to volunteer for the business of killing Germans, or whomever else Britain chose to make war on, so that Britain would grant Irish Home Rule. And if Nationalist Ireland did not fill the ranks of the British army while the Ulster Unionists did, Britain would call off Home Rule. And from the Ulster Unionist point of view, if young Protestant men did not enlist to sacrifice their lives for the Empire in sufficient numbers, Britain might draw the conclusion that Nationalist Ireland was more loyal after all than Unionist Ulster and would compel them to be governed by a Home Rule Parliament in Dublin. And so a kind of blackmail was used by Britain, against the two communities in Ireland for its own interest in getting them into the trenches, and the graves.

James Connolly writing in *The Worker's Republic* of 28th September 1915 in an article called, '*Wee Joe Devlin*' had the following to say about the Redmondite recruiting for the war in Belfast:

> "That great, that heroic figure, Wee Joe Devlin, at the recent Convention of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin), told how his society had rallied to the Empire in its day of difficulty—that difficulty for which all good Irish Nationalists were wont to pray… As I think of the hundreds of good men I have known, fathers of families, husbands, sons with aged parents, etc., who have been enticed to leave their homes and dear ones and march out to battle for an Empire that never kept faith with the Irish race, and think that it was Wee Joe's influence that led them to their folly, I think things that the Defence of the Realm Acts will not permit me to print.
>
> "Belfast opponents of Joe Devlin usually refer to him sarcastically as the 'Wee Bottlewasher', alluding to his position before he climbed into power. The sarcasm is pointless. A Bottlewasher was an honest occupation, but a recruiting sergeant luring to their death the men who trusted him and voted him into power is—ah well, let us remember the Defence of the Realm Act.
>
> "The present writer cannot ride up the Falls Road in his own motor car, the penny tram has to do him. But thank God, there are no fresh made graves in Flanders or the Dardanelles filled by the mangled corpses of men whom he coaxed or bullied into leaving their homes and families. And that consolation counts more to the peace of his soul than would the possession of a motor car, or the companionship of grossly overfed boon companions of the Bottlewasher—or of the bottle.
>
> "There are widows in Belfast today whose husbands would still be with them if they had taken my advice; there are orphans in Belfast today whose fathers would still be able to work for them and love them if they had taken my advice; there are stricken mothers and fathers in Belfast today whose sons would still be smiling and happy at the family hearth today if my advice had been listened to. And I am confidant that it will not be long before these widows, orphans and bereaved parents with every sob and sigh will breathe a curse upon the conscienceless politician to whose advice they did listen.
>
> "You can fool all the people some of the time, you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.
>
> "What is true of my attitude in Belfast is true of our attitude in Dublin and all over Ireland wherever our voice and influence could reach.
>
> "We saved the lives of thousands, held together thousands of homes, and amid all the welter and turmoil of a gigantic and unparalleled national betrayal we presented to the world the spectacle of the organised Irish working class standing steadfastly by the highest ideals of freedom, so that the flag of Labour became one with the standard of national liberty."

The recruiting for Britain's Great War brought Redmond's Imperial Ireland to a culmination in a gigantic parade of Redmond's National Volunteers in the Phoenix Park on the first Sunday in April 1915. The London *Times* Special Correspondent described it as "the largest military display Dublin had ever seen." And Joe Devlin's West Belfast men were prominent in this great Redmondite muster.

But within a year another army took the field in the same city and Easter 1915 has become a forgotten event in Irish history.

The Italian job

It was one of the objects of the Liberal Imperialist foreign policy, outlined in the *ABC etc*. articles, to detach Italy from the Triple Alliance, so that Germany could be fully isolated and encircled.

Italy had been a member of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria since 1882. It had joined Germany to gain Bismarck's protection against France and had achieved much of its political stability and economic development in alliance with Germany. But when war broke out Italy decided not to fight alongside its allies, because by a clause in the Triple Alliance she was not required to do so if Great Britain was in the field against them. A declaration of neutrality was accordingly made. This was a great relief to the *Entente*, particularly France, which did not have to send an army to its border with Italy and could employ all its resources on its Germans frontier in August 1914.

In mid-1914 the Italian Premier, Salandra, held negotiations with both the *Entente* and Central Powers behind the scenes and built up its military forces to give it a good negotiating position. Despite the abrogation of its legal and diplomatic commitments, Germany maintained a benevolent attitude toward Italy and acquiesced in its neutrality. But Italian neutrality was not enough for England. From the start of the war Britain set to work to entice the Italians into the ranks of the Entente and against their former allies.

It was in the British interest to expand and escalate the war as much as possible and it was in the interests of Germany to let peaceful nations be, and to stay out of it. And Redmondite

Ireland went along with the British policy one hundred per cent.

A significant consequence of the grandiose moral propaganda that was being produced by Liberal England and its ally, Nationalist Ireland, was the creation of a climate in the world in which it was almost impossible to allow the continued existence of neutrals. How could a country remain neutral when the "war for civilisation" was being conducted all around it? And so it became axiomatic that "he who is not with us is against us."

The Redmondite *Freeman's Journal* put this view across in its editorial of 24 May 1915 when it declared: "Neutrality in the struggle is impossible, and the person who presents it as a policy shows himself as a sneaking sympathizer with the enemy of civilisation and liberty."

As well as being cajoled by the moral propaganda of the Entente, the Italian Government was enticed into the war against Germany by the promise of the "*spoils of war*"—territorial offerings which were often in contradiction to promises made to others, and which were to lead to a lot of future wars, some of which are still going on in the world today (most notably in Palestine/Israel.)

The Entente drew Italy into the anti-German alliance by means of a loan of fifty million pounds, a promise of Trentino, German-speaking South Tyrol to the Brenner (including the purely German districts), part of the coast of Dalmatia (with 700,000 non-Italians), a "free hand" in Albania, a number of small islands in the Adriatic, territories in Africa, and exclusion of the Pope from any of the negotiations leading towards peace or in the post-war settlement. The Italians, like the Irish, banked on a short war, in which their intervention would be decisive. And like the Irish they paid the price when this turned out to be a miscalculation.

The secret *Treaty of London* which Salandra signed with the Entente—its terms were not known to the Italian people—was presented as being binding upon them, although it was merely an offer to be fulfilled only if Italy went to the war by 26 May 1915. But the Italian war press insisted it was binding and the future Fascists, in particular, played on Italy's honour to stand by it. And by that stage they had worked up such a mass feeling towards it that the non-interventionist majority could not oppose entry into the war unless they had been willing to put the matter to the test outside of Parliament. Neutral Italy collapsed and an unprovoked and irredentist war was declared on Austria-Hungary on 23 May.

The *Treaty of London* was only achieved when the British Government broke the Russian resistance to the sacrificing of Slav lands in Dalmatia to the Italians. The pay-off was Edward Grey's secretly negotiated treaty with the Tsar, guaranteeing to Russia Constantinople, the Straits and much of Turkey. This amazing capitulation, exposed by Lenin in 1917, went against the fundamentals of British foreign policy down the ages—"the Russians shall not have Constantinople." This would have given the Pan-Slavist Russian State control of all the Eastern European and Balkan Catholic nationalities whose national rights Ireland was fighting for—if it hadn't been for the Bolshevik revolution.

Later, when England's Tsarist ally had collapsed, it made overtures to Austria which contradicted all England's propaganda against the Hapsburgs. Britain guaranteed the continuation of the Hapsburg Empire as part of the post-war settlement, if Austria changed sides. Austria refused and when the Allies won, the Hapsburg Empire was dismantled. England decided to set up a series of nation states in its place. One of those states was to be Yugoslavia, and for this Britain needed the Dalmatian coast, awarded to Italy by the *Treaty of London*. Suddenly, Italy was found to have no national rights in the area.

The Liberal Imperialists who made war in August 1914 did not seem to have any idea what they were doing beyond destroying Germany as a commercial rival and grabbing the best parts of the Ottoman Empire in the process. Everything else seems to have been left to chance—to be worried about later. This totally reckless policy, as far as the stability of Europe and the outside world was concerned, in which everything was consigned to the British interest in winning the war it had badly miscalculated, was what Ireland now implicated itself in, in its first act of major foreign policy. German Austria, or "East Mark," had been founded by Charlemagne to provide a buffer for the Holy Roman Empire against invasion from the East. And during the time of Napoleon and Tallyrand, it had been a principle of Continental statecraft that the Hapsburg Empire existed to provide a bulwark against Russian expansionism into central Europe.

Up to 1914 Austro-Hungary fulfilled its historic role, not only with incalculable advantage to Western Europe, but with much satisfaction to the mass of its subjects as an evolving multi-national state of three large communities. But, after the rejection of the English offer in 1917, that counted for nothing. That was the way England played fast and loose with the state structures of the Continent, in the interests of winning the war, with catastrophic consequences for post-war Europe. When England destroyed the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with Redmondite help, they set in motion the destabilization of Eastern Europe which ultimately opened the way for Stalin in 1945—with Churchill being the man who was there at the commencement, and at the completion of the process.

The way in which Italy went to war in May 1915 had the effect of seriously undermining constitutional politics in the country. Parliament was proved not to be sovereign as the will of the people was taken to be the popular expression on the streets. It was a precedent that was to be taken up again in Mussolini's march on Rome and coming to power in 1922. As Sir Charles Petrie commented in his '*Lords of the Inland Sea*', it "proved to be the beginning of the end of the Liberal regime in Italy… Parliament was not necessarily synonymous with Italy" (p.19)

The enticement of Italy into the war, aided by Redmondite Ireland, coupled with the Treaty of London and its subversion by England after the war was over, had disastrous political effects in Italy and ultimately for Europe.

The blockade of Germany

The chief instrument of Britain's war on Germany was the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy was, in 1914, the senior service—that is, the major arm of British power in the world. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the British Navy had created the modern world of 1914, at least in respect of the expansion of Britain across it and the global market, which it had policed for more than a century.

In July 1914, even before the war had begun, the Royal Navy was mobilised to ensure the continuation of this situation. One of its first acts was to cut the undersea cables in the Atlantic to ensure that it had a monopoly on news of events where it counted in the world.

The blockade of Germany was the centrepiece of the war British Liberalism declared on Germany. Apparently another secret strategy was drawn up by the Royal Navy which involved taking the world financial markets to the brink of collapse in order to short-cut the war. But the effects of this policy were initially so devastating and provoked such fear from British

capitalism that it was quickly reined in and the blockade was fallen back upon.

The moralists of British Liberalism were the chief proponents of the blockade against German civilians. As A.G. Gardiner, of the *Daily News* put it, in advancing the case of the "silent effectiveness" of the Royal Navy on 12th December 1914: "You do take my life when you do take the means whereby I live. And it is the means whereby she lives that the British Navy is taking from Germany."

And on July 31st, 1915 the same writer suggested: "the pressure of sea power, though slow to make itself felt, has a deadly and cumulative certainty that is the more irresistible because its operations are so subtle and incalculable."

By the end of 1914 practically every German ship had been driven off the high seas by the Royal Navy and her maritime commerce was stopped. At this point Britain had not yet abandoned all the restrictions laid down by the *Declarations of London and Paris* and by the *Hague Conventions* but it exercised enough pressure on Germany to satisfy the Liberal press that Germany was a nation under the cosh whose resources were being depleted.

The blockade was effectively in place and complete when arrangements to regulate trade with Germany were imposed by Britain on the neutral nations of Europe. The fact that this contradicted the stated claim of waging a war for small nations seemed to be immaterial.

To get round the British blockade Germany began to use the provisions of the *Declaration of London* (1908) on maritime trade to transfer her trade through neutral ships and ports. 'Conditional contraband' shipped in this way was supposed to be immune to interference, and thus constituted a way of getting around the blockade. The British moved therefore to prevent this—safe in the knowledge that their position of naval supremacy would mean that they would never need to resort to using neutral ships and ports to the same extent as Germany.

In October 1914 an Order in Council proclaimed that the Royal Navy would presume that any vessel carrying 'conditional contraband' to a neutral port where those products lacked an 'acceptable' signer for the order would be liable to seizure. The British had noticed an increase in the number of cargoes consigned "to order," which meant that the receiver of the goods could do whatever they wanted with these products after they arrived at the neutral port, such as sell them to a German merchant or for shipment to Germany.

The Order in Council shifted onto the owner of the goods the responsibility for proving that the ultimate destination of a cargo was not the enemy and therefore made all goods liable to seizure if the Royal Navy was not satisfied of an acceptable destination. Thus the policy of "stop and seizure" was made vastly easier for the Royal Navy and neutral trading with Germany began to be strangled.

The Order also asserted the right of the British Admiralty to designate any neutral country "an enemy base of supply" if it believed the enemy was drawing supplies for its military through that country. In other words, Britain began to treat neutral countries supplying Germany as if they were a part of Germany itself. This measure allowed the Royal Navy to seize shipments of 'conditional contraband' headed for neutral ports and compel the shippers to present evidence that the cargo was not on its way to the enemy.

The growing pressure laid on neutral European states in late 1914 was further increased when the Admiralty declared the North Sea to be a 'war zone' on the 3rd of November which effectively removed Holland as a supply route to Germany.

The British blockade represented an encirclement of Germany, in which under British pressure, the neutral Low Countries, Scandinavia and the Baltic States were stopped trading with the Germans. Most important, Germany was prevented from purchasing Swedish iron ore and other materials. It represented a siege of Europe by the Royal Navy.

The starvation blockade

A new policy was then used to ratchet up the pressure on Germany. On New Year's Day 1915 the *Daily News* wrote: "We have departed from our old practice of stopping cargoes of foodstuffs only when destined for the enemy forces, and are stopping them even when they might be used for the civil population."

The justification for interfering with food meant for civilians was that Germany had engaged in price-fixing. The Liberal Government saw this as a crime against the Free Market.

What the Germans had done, under pressure from the Royal Navy, was to assume control of all the grain and flour in the country and to fix prices in the German market. This enabled Liberal England to insist that Germany had instituted a kind of socialist war economy in which the Royal Navy could no longer distinguish between the military and civilian populations. It was maintained that the German Government's action made the whole of Germany 'an armed camp' and consequently foodstuffs, even when destined for civilians, were put into the contraband list. Essentially the siege of Europe was thereafter instituted and enforced by the Royal Navy.

On January 30th in the *Daily News*, Editor A.G. Gardiner, in an article '*Berlin's Black Week*', wrote in the following terms of the blockade against Germany:

> "We hold the purse of the world in our hands, more important, the keys of the world. And it is because we have locked the door against her that that economic stress which will finally bring her overthrow is casting a shadow over her… the nation is put on rations, and no ingenious explanation can alter the import of that grim fact. Prices are soaring here, but it is not because the storehouse of the world is closed to us. It is because transport is insufficient but the trouble with Germany goes deeper. It is a nation under siege and a nation whose wells are running dry."

Churchill, confident in the power of the Royal Navy, even suggested in the House of Commons on February 15th 1915 that British naval warfare could win the war by itself: "We shall bring the full force of naval pressure to bear on the enemy. It may be enough without war on land to secure victory over the foe."

The Liberal *Daily News* celebrated Churchill's speech with an editorial entitled '*The Triumph of the Navy*' which pointed out the great influence of the Royal Navy upon the war:

> "It is easy to forget the magnitude of that influence because its greatest achievements are as silent as they are crushing. But in all history there has been nothing comparable with the ascendancy which the British fleet has established on the high seas today. It makes Germany a nation under siege, living upon its own vitals, and apart from all military considerations, doomed by the mere flux of time. But even yet the Navy has not put forth the full measure of its power… we may declare a blockade of the German ports or we may extend the definition of contraband. Already there has been a hint that the latter course may be pursued in relation to wheat. The justification for this policy would be the fact that the German government have taken control of the wheat supply of the country, and that therefore it is now a formal military element in the situation. The inclusion of wheat in the list of contraband is strictly within our rights."

The submarine response

In response to this action, in February 1915, the Germans threatened a submarine campaign. At the same time however, the Germans made it clear that, if the Royal Navy ceased to prevent foodstuffs for civilians reaching Germany, it would withdraw this threat. In response to this President Wilson proposed that the Royal Navy should allow the foodstuffs intended for the civilian population to enter Germany under American guarantee and under American distribution in return for the Germans dropping their threat of submarine warfare.

However, the British refused Wilson's compromise, believing the submarine threat to be all bluff:

> "The proposal is not likely to be acceptable to the British government. Germany has menaced us with horrors and penalties she has no means of inflicting. Whatever our losses from submarines, they cannot represent more than an inappreciable fraction of our merchant marine. Germany, unable to enforce her threats, is, not unnaturally, willing to withdraw it on conditions. But it is not to our interest to listen to any conditions. We prefer that Germany should do her worst, knowing very well that her worst will be quite bearable. Apart, therefore, from the difficulty, the virtual impossibility of distinguishing between food for civilians and food for the Army in a country where the government has taken all foodstuffs under its control, our answer to the American suggestion should be a polite refusal." (*Daily News*, 25 February 1915)

So Britain, believing it had command of the seas, scoffed at the temerity of the Germans in threatening to restrict naval conflict.

The Liberal Government encouraged the submarine warfare against its merchant shipping believing that it was a bluff and that the damage that could be done in the naval conflict by the Royal Navy far outweighed that which could be done by German submarines. It therefore turned down the American compromise which would have led to fewer deaths among civilians and merchant seamen of all countries and instead opted for an escalation of the war.

Most of the Unionist press did not bother to conceal the fact that the British policy with regard to contraband started the submarine campaign rather than the other way about and that it was the Royal Navy that was the provocative element in the escalation of naval conflict.

For the Liberal press, however, there was always the question of conscience. As soon as Germany made its intention of retaliating known the Liberal press proceeded to call the actions of the Royal Navy retaliatory. And they also availed of the invisibility of the pressure exerted by the silent British Navy compared with the visibility of the German submarine campaign to produce atrocity propaganda.

What united both Unionist and Liberal was the conviction that it was the inalienable right of the Royal Navy to rule the seas in order to exert pressure upon the enemy. The right was looked upon by all sections of the British state as a sacred duty with the moral sanction to inflict blockade on the civilians of both the enemy and neutrals viewed as being beyond dispute in Britain's siege of Europe.

The fall of The Liberal Government

In early 1915 the realisation hit Britain that the war was not going to be a quick one and that it was going to be a lot costlier than had been anticipated. The Liberal Imperialists who had planned the war had imagined a war something on the lines of that conducted against Napoleonic France, albeit bigger in scale. The Royal Navy was to dominate the seas blockading Germany into starvation, whilst the French, assisted by a relatively small British army, on one flank and the "Russian Steamroller", on the other, ran down the Hun on the continent. Meanwhile Colonial forces would seize Germany's overseas possessions. But the war the Liberals imagined failed to materialise and the Germans proved a tougher nut to crack than anticipated. It was therefore becoming evident that a different kind of war, involving the full mobilisation of the country, was necessary, which the Liberal Government was not predisposed to wage.

At the War Council meeting in May 1915 the extent of the failure of the Liberal war was described. The naval and land attack on the Dardanelles had gone nowhere, at great cost: the fleet had lapsed into passivity; twenty thousand men had been lost in the disastrous offensive in France for no territorial gain; and Russia was beginning to weaken after its defeat at Tannenberg.

Asquith was then put under pressure by Bonar Law and Lloyd George. The alternatives he was presented with were either to admit the Unionists to a coalition or face a Commons debate on the war, risking the fall of the government. An important consideration in Asquith's decision to accept coalition was the delicately poised negotiations with Italy. It was feared that any dissensions shown in British governing circles would have a fatal effect on the Italian nerve. Paradoxically, the Unionists used the Italian situation, which the Irish Party had helped bring about, to end the life of the Liberal Government.

And so Asquith gave way to Coalition Government, and sacrificed half his colleagues, in order to cling to some degree of power, as Liberal England's war plan miscarried.

The change of government in 1915 was a change not enacted through the democratic process. Party politics had been suspended even before the Coalition was formed and elections had been called off when the war had begun. And the Home Rule conflict had given a powerful stimulus to the new mode of governing. The Liberal Government that launched the war gave way to Coalition Government of Liberals and Unionists. And it gave way in a political struggle conducted outside of the democratic process in a kind of internal coup d'etat.

The Coalition Government was not only undemocratic, it also included as a major component the Unionist Party, which between 1912 and 1914, had denied the constitutional legitimacy of the policy of the elected Government, and had carried the State to the brink of civil war by supporting the use of violence to prevent the implementation of an Act of Parliament.

It included in senior Cabinet positions people who defied the law with impunity because of their ability to bring substantial force into the equation to overrule the democratic verdict of the electorate. The men who raised and armed an illegal private army in Ulster to defy the law and overrule the democratic process by the threat of force in 1914, were Cabinet Ministers a year later and represented the law and legality at the highest level of State.

The first Unionist *coup d'etat*, of 1915—and the more thorough one in 1916—had enormous ramifications for Ireland. The formation of the Coalition might have been seen in England as a reluctant concession to necessity or indeed a progressive development. But the casting aside of the democratic process in Britain as a wartime expedient had serious implications for Ireland and Home Rule.

The formation of the Coalition was the effective end of the Home Rule alliance on which the Redmondite project depended and on which the Irish Party claimed its effectiveness in getting self-government for Ireland. The effectiveness of that alliance had been illusory since August 1914 but now that fact became

wholly transparent.

The most immediate effect of the demise of the "*great English democracy*" was the effect on the Irish willingness to participate in the war on "*Prussianism*". Up until April 1915, 1,500 Irishmen on average were enlisting in the British army per week. In the months following the formation of the Coalition this reduced to 750. It only picked up again at the end of the year to 1,100 a week when Redmond began a vigorous new recruiting campaign—in defence of the Coalition.

Conscription

Unionist contempt for Liberalism was given real strength by the failure of the Asquith Government, which had launched the Great War in "defence of civilisation", but which failed to impose on the citizen a duty proportionate to the cause it was defending. Conscription was clearly a requirement of the Great War that the Liberal Government had mounted but the Liberals continued to believe that given the Allied numerical superiority a limited war conducted on Liberal principles and mainly waged by the Royal Navy, would be still sufficient to dispose of Germany.

The Liberals tried to persist in fighting the Great War with volunteers. But in doing so they completely debased the idea of "voluntarism" by fostering a campaign of moral harassment that forced all but those with the strongest wills to enlist. And the Redmondites did much the same thing in Ireland, although, given Ireland's history, not quite as successfully.

By the end of 1915 Serbia had been destroyed, Bulgaria had joined the enemy, Roumania and Greece had resisted allied pressure and stayed out of the war, the Gallipoli Peninsula had been humiliatingly evacuated during December after the loss of 28,000 men, and the Turks had reinforced Mesopotamia and joined the Bulgarian line to bottle up the Allies in Salonika.

This was the political/military context within which conscription became inevitable.

The Redmondite behaviour in the conscription debate was wholly damaging for the party. They were telling Irishmen to volunteer to fight the "war for civilisation and small nations" and yet they did not believe the issue was important enough to support conscription to defend the ideals they were telling people to die for.

Redmond wanted to give Ireland a military existence within the Imperial scheme of things and subsume Ulster Unionism within this, in one-way or another. He saw the war as his great chance. But the introduction of Conscription posed a fundamental problem. The British people accepted conscription because they were in such dire need of it. They were used to fighting Imperialist wars, even if this one was of a different character, for much higher stakes. It was conscription or lose the war against Germany and surrender England's position of dominance in the world. So the loss of an element of the moral dimension with the abandonment of the voluntary principle was not felt in the same way as it was in Ireland.

What the Irish Party called "*Prussianism*" was being instituted in Britain as the war effort could no longer be sustained by "voluntary" recruitment.

The introduction of Conscription made it increasingly difficult for the Irish Party leaders to sustain the line of argument that the war was the response of "a free people" against the compulsion of "*Prussianism*". In 1916 it became obvious that the Great War was just another war in the long line of Imperialist wars waged by Britain, albeit much greater in scale and destruction.

There was not in Ireland the long tradition and experience of military affairs that was characteristic of England. It was commonplace for England to be at war, it felt most comfortable when it was at war, and it hardly had a national existence apart from during wartime. Ireland was very different. Long ago England had broken the Irish military spirit and incorporated its residue into the militarism of the British State. It did not have the military backbone of the English nation. It had always derided the military tradition as an aspect of the alien imposition and it was not surprising that it began to buckle when confronted by the experience of the greatest act of violence the world had ever witnessed.

When the war became, as Churchill noted, an exercise in mass slaughter, with the British Generals basing their strategy on the attrition of losing less men, in comparative terms, than the Germans Ireland was unable to adapt to the mass killing and slaughter.

That was not unusual. Russia collapsed under the strain of it. And at the end of 1917 the French army suffered a series of mutinies that left it almost incapable of offensive activity. Despite the fact that the French had most to lose in the war they began losing the stomach for the fight. And it was only the British resilience—formed through being a militarist state and society with the conviction that it was its destiny to dominate the world, which required sacrifice—that held the Western Front together and made ultimate victory possible: and the prospect of the arrival of fresh American Armies.

The Irish Republicans, though small in number in 1915, reduced the scale of depletion of the Irish population. If there had been no Republican presence in 1915, conscription could have been instituted in Ireland so that Redmond could make her play a full part in the killing and dying But instead, five months later, at Easter 1916, a halt was called to "voluntary" recruitment as well.

Pope Benedict's Peace effort

Things might have been very different for Ireland, Europe and the rest of the world now implicated in Britain's Great War if Pope Benedict's peace initiative of 1915 had not been thwarted by Britain.

In July 1915 the Vatican took the initiative in proposing peace talks among the belligerents. Earlier in the year Benedict had attempted to secretly arrange a separate peace between Germany, France and Belgium. But he had been rebuffed and put his failure down to British intransigence in the background.

Benedict XV launched the new initiative on the anniversary of the outbreak of war, warning the belligerents, rather prophetically: "Abandon the mutual threat of destruction. Remember Nations do not die; humiliated and oppressed, they bear the weight of the yoke imposed upon them, preparing themselves for their come-back and transmitting from the one generation to the next a sad legacy of hatred and vendetta", (John Pollard, *Benedict XV—The Pope of Peace*, p.117.)

Three days later the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, announced his readiness to discuss peace terms.

The Vatican called on Irish bishops to support the Pope's peace projects by requesting that the Irish Party MPs bring pressure on the British Government to consent to the opening up of negotiations for peace. This led to a conflict between Redmond and the Bishop of Limerick over the Pope's plea for a negotiated peace.

Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick had been the Irish Parliamentary Party's strongest critic in the past, but had held his tongue since the Home Rule Bill of 1912 and had ceased his attacks on the

Home Rule/Liberal alliance. But he saw that Redmond had been conned by Asquith's suspension of the Home Rule Act on the Statute Book in September 1914 and took the view that it was merely a ploy to get as much Irish cannon-fodder into British uniform by making the country believe it owed a debt of gratitude to an England because it had changed from an Imperialist aggressor into a champion of small nations.

The Redmondites saw the Pope's appeal for peace as "inopportune" because they believed the British Empire held the strategic ascendancy over Germany, and it was vital that the "war for small nations" should be won without compromise, a compromise that would do nothing for the prospects of Irish Home Rule.

The Redmondites concurred with the British view that Germany's various peace initiatives in 1915 were merely a sign of underlying weakness. And three more years of slaughter, and millions of deaths, on the Western front and elsewhere, did not shake the Redmondites in the belief that it was all worth it to achieve Germany's destruction.

So Redmond gave a most discourteous reply to the Bishop in which he said he would not be justified in doing anything to stop the war.

Imperial Britain and its Redmondite annex in Ireland did not want a negotiated peace in 1915, 1916 or 1917. It saw matters as the "new Rome" and wanted to enhance national hatreds and escalate and widen the war so that Germany could be destroyed like the original Rome had seen off Carthage and imposed a "Carthaginian peace".

Redmond was quite prepared to go against the Pope, and to treat his Bishop with contempt, in pursuit of this policy of no compromise, of a fight to a finish. But the consequences for his party and Europe of this policy were nothing short of catastrophic.

Ireland in 1916

In 1916 a Republican grouping in Ireland raised a small, ill-equipped, army, and went to war against Britain with a declaration of Irish independence. It declared a formal alliance with Germany and Turkey—"*our gallant allies in Europe*"—and organised a protest in arms against what Redmond was implicating the Irish in.

It is claimed by our current breed of academics and their media mouthpieces that what happened in 1916 was an assault against democracy.

The 1916 Insurrection had no more of an electoral mandate for making war on Britain than the Home Rule Party had for making war on Germany, Austria and Ottoman Turkey. But that similarity does not establish a moral equality between Home Rulers and Republicans in the matter of going to war without an electoral mandate.

Democracy was not operational in Ireland in 1916 for a start. The Government of the state, which had been elected in 1910, had been replaced without troubling the electorate through an internal coup by a different administration made up of people deeply hostile to Ireland—people who wished to exterminate the Irish in great exercises in slaughter at the front.

In Ireland itself, a one-Party embryonic-state was in formation. There was no prospect of elections. And all political opposition was being suppressed by the military authorities under extraordinary legislation. The male population was under pressure from all the propaganda resources of the State and most of the Catholic clergy, and the dominant party in Catholic Ireland, to take part in killing for political ends—with no one to say when it would end. And now the unelected Government of the State was moving toward bringing in a measure to enrol by compulsion all men of military age who had failed to volunteer for Imperial killing duties.

The Home Rulers might have sought an electoral mandate for war on Germany by resigning their seats in Parliament and contesting them in Ireland on a programme of war-making. They chose not to do this and when their ordinary electoral mandate ran out in December 1915, they continued to sit in Parliament as unelected members and to take part in the British war effort, which by this time had become greatly expanded, reckless and catastrophic.

If the Home Rulers had sought a war mandate at any time in 1914 and 1915, they would probably have secured it, with all the resources of the State at their disposal. The Republicans, on the other hand, could not have sought a mandate for their war. They could only, like everybody else, make war without an electoral mandate.

To realise their objective of independence the Republicans had to make war in 1916 because Britain made it abundantly clear that Ireland could not gain independence by voting for it, but only by defeating the Empire. And it had set aside the electoral basis of Government for the duration of the Great War on Germany, Austria and Ottoman Turkey, making a democratic protest impossible.

What actually caused the Rising was Redmond's enlisting of the Irish Volunteers in the British Army to make war on Germany and the Ottoman Turks. This resulted in a split in the Volunteers, and it produced the small Republican Army that was able to organise itself publicly and engage in manoeuvres in preparation for the day when something could be done. These Volunteers that split from Redmond were permitted a freedom of action by Dublin Castle that they otherwise would not have got. Dillon referred to this in a speech in 1914 when he said that in days gone by if the Irish had marched in military formation they would have been mown down by musket fire and grape shot. The right to open military activity outside the military structure of the State was something Redmond won and enhanced with his support for Britain's Great War.

British interference with the Republican volunteers would have disturbed Redmond's volunteers and reduced the supply of badly-needed cannon-fodder for Britain. And so Redmond's policy provided both the stimulus and the opportunity for the Insurrection of 1916.

If Redmond had waited on the actual establishment of Home Rule Government within the Union, before committing himself actively to Imperial militarism as part of the Union, he would have remained in command of the situation and thwarted any prospect of an Easter or any other Rising. But Redmond provoked the Rising and made it possible, and then one thing led on to another.

The British view of history prevalent in Irish academia today encourages the notion that the end of the Home Rule Party was caused by the execution of the leaders of the Insurrection in 1916 by General Maxwell. The inference being that there are nothing like martyrs and "*blood sacrifices*" to get the Irish roused.

What is completely disregarded by this exercise in blame limitation is the possibility that the Irish noticed the course of political events and saw a Great Fraud being perpetrated upon them and the Home Rulers being strung along still. The fruits of the Parliamentary tactics were there to be seen in a still-born Home Rule Act, Unionist opponents of Home Rule rising to dominance in the state, and the wasting of tens of thousands of Irishmen as cannon fodder in a war of Imperialist expansion. It was the accumulation of these things which led them to draw certain conclusions, after the stimulus of 1916.

The War on the Ottoman Empire

The Great War on Germany was not only catastrophic for Europe but also for the Middle East because of Britain's intention not only to do down Germany but to also destroy the Ottoman Empire.

The alliance that Britain entered into with Russia in 1907 was the single most important event that made a British war on Ottoman Turkey inevitable in 1914.

In order to recruit the Tsar and his steamroller for use in pulverizing Germany something had to be promised to the Tsar for his help. That something was Istanbul/Constantinople. That fact should always be therefore borne in mind when it is suggested that Turkey brought the Great War on itself. The fact of the matter was that in order to defeat Germany Britain had to promise the Tsar Constantinople and in order for the Russians to get hold of Constantinople there had to be a war—a war on Turkey, quite aside from the British desire for territorial conquests from the Ottoman areas.

Britain had acted as an ally of the Ottoman Empire for most of the century before its Great War. During this period Britain was determined to preserve the Ottoman State as a giant buffer zone between its Empire and the expanding Russian Empire. It was part of what was known as the 'Great Game' in England that 'the Russians shall not have Constantinople' and the warm water port that this would have given them. Later on in the century the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli negotiated the Treaty of Berlin to help preserve the Ottoman Empire against another attempted Russian expansion in the region.

England's objective in fighting the Crimean War (1854-56) had been to preserve the Ottoman Empire in order to prevent Russia from becoming a naval Power in the Mediterranean after gaining the Straits. The Dardanelles were strategically important for Britain because they controlled the East-West passage between Europe and Asia and the North-South passage between The Black Sea (which is really a lake) and the Mediterranean. The war in the Crimea ended, as Britain desired, in a treaty that banned passage through the Bosphorous and Dardanelles to all naval units—which for all practical purposes meant Russian naval units. That effectively bottled up the Russian Southern fleet in the Black Sea.

The *Peace of Paris* of 1856 that England insisted upon guaranteed the political integrity of Ottoman Turkey and forced Russia to remove her claim to be sole protector of the Slavs in the Balkans, conferring it, instead on a combination involving the French, British and Sardinians and extending it into the Ottoman territories in Asia.

In 1871, during the Franco-Prussian War, Russia intimated that she no longer felt bound by the Black Sea clauses of the *Treaty of Paris* but Lord Granville, Foreign Minister in Gladstone's Government, threatened Russia with war and forced her to sign up to the *Treaty of London* of that year where the principle was established that no nation could contract out of a treaty without the agreement of the other contracting parties to that arrangement.

Britain nearly went to war again with Russia in 1877 when it looked like the Czar was going to take Constantinople in the war with the Ottomans.

However, whilst Britain was determined to preserve the Ottoman Empire and was prepared to use force to prevent the Russians having Constantinople, its relations with the Ottoman Sultan were very disadvantageous to the Turks. England, with the French, helped preserve the Ottoman Empire in a weak, semi-dependent state through devices like the Capitulations, and absorbed outlying Ottoman territories into the British Empire periodically (e.g. Cyprus, Egypt and Kuwait) when a favourable opportunity arose.

At the same time, despite some writers in England calling for a liquidation of the Ottoman territories and their sharing between the Imperialist Powers, it remained British policy to preserve the Ottoman Empire so that it would not fall into the wrong hands and pose a threat to the British Empire in India. Chunks were broken off the Ottoman Empire by the British but this was done in a controlled manner so that the whole edifice did not break down to Russia's and France's advantage in the region.

However, the 1904 and 1907 arrangements with France and Russia set in motion a process that would inevitably result in both war on Germany and the Ottomans.

The War on the Baghdad Railway

At the same time as Britain had begun to be concerned about Germany's commercial prowess she noted her developing relationship with the Ottoman Empire.

Germany's involvement with the Ottoman Empire was fundamentally commercial. It was not the predatory relationship which the Imperialist Powers of France, Britain and Russia had with the Ottomans. It sought to consolidate the Islamic system in the region, which Germany saw as an established civilisation that ought to be preserved. Germany promised economic development and a modernisation of the infrastructure of the Ottoman Empire. In 1898 the Kaiser made a celebrated visit to Istanbul to show Germany's good faith.

The German objective seems to have been to rejuvenate and modernise the Ottoman Empire in exchange for favourable commercial rights there. England and Russia had seen the Ottoman Empire as the 'sick man of Europe' and they had been waiting around for his death, but now they saw Germany threatening to revive the health of the sick man, and dash their respective dreams of profiting territorially from an Ottoman collapse.

The great connecting point between Germany and the Ottoman Empire that earmarked them for mutual destruction was the Berlin to Baghdad Railway, starting in Berlin, and running down through the Hapsburg dominions, across the Bosphorous through Syria, and then onto Mesopotamia, to Baghdad, Basra and Kuwait. This German railway was begun in 1900 and was due for completion in 1915 and would have linked up the Ottoman Empire with central Europe and provided an alternative route to India.

The Baghdad Railway produced alarm in British circles because of the linking up of commercial interests that were taken to be a threat to its own ambitions. For a generation before 1914 Britain had its heart set on incorporating the Middle East into its Empire, so that it would have a land bridge from India to Egypt. But Britain's plans for this region were frustrated by the Railway and the intensified German involvement with the Ottoman Empire it promised.

Within the five volumes of *'The Great Events of the Great War'*, Maurice Jastrow, Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, says: "In the last analysis the Bagdad Railway will be found to be the largest single contributing factor in bringing about the war, because through it more than through any other cause the mutual distrust among European Powers has been nurtured until the entire atmosphere of international diplomacy became vitiated" (p.194.)

In an earlier book of Jastrow's *'The War and the Bagdad Railway: The Story of Asia Minor and its relation to the present conflict',* published in 1917, he noted: "British policy was determined that the railway should not reach the Persian Gulf under German control. This was clearly enunciated by Lord Cranbourne, in January 1902, who stated that "the maintenance of the status quo was incompatible with the occupation by any Great Power of a port on these waters. The Bagdad Railway, if extended, even to Basra, would destroy the trade that English merchants and English capital had built up in the most important centre between India and the Suez Canal…" (p.99.)

England had established extensive trading relations in the Mesopotamian region over centuries. The area was ear-marked for the British Empire when circumstances obliged. But in the decade before the war German trading began, as in other areas, to supplant the English through the sheer ability of German business and the quality and cost of its products. And so the idea of taking by military means what could not be gained through legitimate business competition was mooted.

Back in 1903 a deal was nearly struck between the Germans and the Unionist Prime Minister, Balfour, which would have led to the Railway becoming a joint venture between the Germans and Britain, as well as the French. But after pressure from the Liberal Imperialists, Balfour withdrew from the conciliatory German offer. This proved a watershed in Anglo-German relations as well as Anglo-Ottoman relations.

Britain had been the pioneer in the idea of a Baghdad railway. In 1837 she spent vast sums on a survey of the Euphrates valley and in 1851 obtained a concession from the Sultan for the construction of a line between the port of Alexandretta, in south-east Turkey, and the Persian Gulf. The objective was to shorten and cheapen the journey to India.

But when the Suez Canal was purchased in 1876 Britain abandoned the project, only to see it taken up by the Germans a couple of decades later. In the intervening years the first track of the railway was still a British concern, but there was no enthusiasm to develop it after the Suez purchase had seemingly created a shorter route to India, and the Deutsche Bank subsequently acquired it.

Britain was content to allow the existence of slow trade routes, including railways, to continue across the gateway to India whilst it controlled the fastest and most economic route through the Suez Canal. But a fast and efficient railway through the Ottoman territories toward the Persian Gulf would have provided a link between Europe and India that England could not control.

England had been the great builder of railways in the world and saw them as the instrument of progress within her Empire. But she did everything to deter and obstruct the completion of railways where they threatened economic progress elsewhere, as in Siberia, the Balkans and the Ottoman territories.

The Baghdad Railway promised not only to facilitate the economic needs of Germany but would have also opened a much shorter and safer route for its trade than that through the Baltic and North Sea, through the English Channel, the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal—all controlled by the guns of the Royal Navy.

Eastern Europe, the Near East, the East coast of Africa and the Far East all offered Germany raw materials and potential new markets free from a potential Royal Navy blockade.

In 1898 an Agreement was reached between the Kaiser and the Sultan for the German construction of the Railway, after the British had abandoned the project. It was begun in 1900 and this great engineering project's tracks climbed huge mountains and crossed vast deserts, following one of the oldest, richest, trade routes in the world, where caravans had previously crossed, from India to Europe. It was due for completion in 1915 and would have linked up the Ottoman Empire with central Europe and provided an alternative route to India. The Railway was also planned to be extended to Basra and through Palestine to Mecca to facilitate the Moslem pilgrimages.

It was felt that if a railroad could be arranged through Austria, Bulgaria, Turkey, Mesopotamia to Baghdad and the Persian Gulf, along with the necessary conventions with the countries concerned, the economic potential of the Eurasian heartland would be unleashed. The transportation of merchandise by such a route would also be far cheaper than by Britain's roundabout shipping road through the Suez Canal. The Railway would have also provided great economic advantages, putting the new European heavy industries in touch with the metal resources of Anatolia; the textile industry in contact with the cotton, wool and hemp of the Balkans and Middle East, and provide a route for oil from Persia.

In short, the Berlin-Baghdad Railway had revolutionary consequences for the commerce of the world and threatened a fundamental realignment in the economic axis of the world market in favour of continental Europe and away from maritime England. And it was estimated that it would increase Germany's commercial opportunities ten-fold through the shipping lines that would emanate from its proposed terminus in the Persian Gulf to African, Asian and Australasian ports.

What England was concerned about was the fact that this economic development would take place outside of the reach of the Royal Navy. Britain controlled the world market and commerce by its control of the seas and the creation of a powerful land-based market, free from British interference, would threaten the British military dominance of commerce (and undermine the effective use of the Balance of Power Policy being applied to continental Europe in future).

British Imperial writers believed that the Baghdad Railway had the potential to overwhelm British advantage by eroding Britain's only remaining competitive edge—its power on the seas.

The British attitude to the Railway went through a final transition with the strategic orientation toward Russia and France, and against Germany. But this was not made clear to the Turks. Some ambiguity remained—convincing Constantinople that if they satisfied British concerns with regard to it all would be fine. As with Belgium in 1914, signals were deliberately confusing. Mixed messages acted as an invitation to come on to ensure a reason for conflict.

The British war program in 1914 was for the establishment of a Cape-Cairo-Calcutta project which proposed to embed the Suez Canal in 8000 miles of British territory running from South Africa to India. This would end the prospect of the Berlin to Baghdad Railway ever achieving its function in the world, and leave the British Empire masters of the Eurasian heartland and world trade for the foreseeable future.

The Berlin-Baghdad Railway was a major cause of the war because Britain looked at it and saw the economic advantages it

would provide to continental Eurasia. At this time the Royal Navy controlled the global market by ruling the sea. It was feared that if the Berlin to Baghdad railway was built trade would go on across land which was beyond the guns of the Royal Navy. Britain was also concerned that the railway would transport goods at a lower cost, giving the Germans a commercial advantage over Britain. And there might even be the development of a great customs union—a kind of early European Community, with Germany at its head—that would prosper outside of the global market that Britain was establishing and which the Royal Navy policed.

One of the first things Britain determined to do about this railway was to stop it achieving a port at the Persian Gulf. It was the British policy to prevent any Power establishing a trade route at this point because England was obsessed with the security of the 'jewel in its crown,' India. For this reason, a local tribal leader was encouraged to detach his territory from the Ottoman Empire and establish his own principality called Kuwait, guaranteed by Britain, so that the Baghdad railway could be prevented from having a terminus.

When the Germans saw how important this issue was to Britain they decided to make concessions over the Railway. However, these proved to be too late because the process of starting the war had already begun.

Britain and the Young Turks

British accounts present a number of justifications for why they extended their Great War into the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. The first one is that the Germans lured the Turks to their doom by political trickery. A second argument centres on one of the Young Turk leaders, Enver Pasha, and claims that he worked with the Germans so that Ottoman power could be expanded after a successful war. In other words, Britain, like the Kaiser, accused him of desiring conquest and world-domination.

The Great War on the Ottoman Empire is usually treated as an incident in the war against Germany, with the Ottomans taken as a mere military ally of the Kaiser. But the activity and behaviour of the Turkish Government in the years preceding the Great War suggest that the Ottoman Government did everything possible to establish good relations with England and France, and the alliance with Germany was a defensive act of the last resort when the Ottoman Government was left with no other option.

The Young Turks, who had overthrown the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, in 1908, were admirers of Britain and France. Many of them had been educated in London and Paris and had got their political ideas from there. They wished to disentangle Ottoman Turkey from the German connection and to establish closer ties with Britain and France—and even the Russians.

For decades Britain had advised the Ottomans to reform. But when a reformist government, the Young Turks, came to power while it was formally welcomed in public, in the corridors of power alarm bells rang. A healthy democratic Ottoman State was feared by Britain for its potential to provide inspiration to the Islamic world against Western control—as well as to Africans and others under the Imperial heel. Whilst Turkey was a "sick man" on its deathbed the Ottoman State posed few problems for England but if it were to recover and inspire all bets were off.

Between November 1908 and June 1914 the Young Turk Government made at least six attempts to establish defensive alliances with Britain, Russia and France—but all were rejected. Some humiliating economic concessions were granted to Britain along with recognition of the British control in the Persian Gulf and Kuwait in an attempt at buying them off. England was granted a monopoly on navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Mesopotamia. And it was agreed that the Berlin/ Baghdad Railway should not terminate at Basra and also should have two British directors on its board.

As part of this conciliating process, and as a token of goodwill, the Young Turks entered into a naval agreement with Britain in which British dockyards took orders for Turkish battleships, under the supervision of Winston Churchill and the Admiralty, and a British naval mission was established at Constantinople. By 1914 the size of this naval mission was as large as the German military mission, and they were looked on as a counter-balance to each other by the Turks. And so if it was said that Turkey had a military alliance with Germany in 1914 it could be equally said that she had a naval alliance with England.

The Turks offered England extraordinary positions of influence in the Ottoman State—positions that no other country with concern for its sovereignty would offer. They had entrusted to Britain the most vital components of the defence of their capital—the reorganisation of their navy under Rear-Admiral Douglas Gamble and Admiral Arthur Limpus and an English Naval Mission, and the modernisation of the arsenal at the Golden Horn (Turkey's only source of munitions) by Armstrong and Vickers. Admiral Limpus offered advice to the Turkish Admiralty on such matters as the location of mine fields in the Straits and mine laying techniques as well as torpedo lines.

It is not surprising that the British took on this constructive work, even though their long term ambition was to destroy the Ottoman Empire. It countered German influence at Constantinople, gave the English a unique, inside knowledge of the defences of the Turkish capital and the Turkish Navy—and made sure that the Russians, French and Germans did not possess such influence or information themselves. And when the English naval mission left, those in charge of it were the first to suggest to Winston Churchill that Constantinople should be attacked, with all the inside information they had obtained.

The famous British statesman, Maurice Hankey, of the Royal Navy, the Committee of Imperial Defence and then Cabinet Secretary for many years, conducted extensive spying operations on behalf of Royal Naval Intelligence in the summer of 1907 based on the contingency that Britain would soon be at war with Germany and Turkey.

Hankey and his colleagues scrutinized the harbours and naval defences of the Ottoman Empire from Syria up to the Black Sea. He surveyed the coastal defences of the Dardanelles with an amphibious landing at Gallipoli in mind, to follow up a report of the Committee of Imperial Defence which had been produced in December 1906, all under cover as a trusted guest of the Ottoman Sultan. And it was Hankey as Secretary to the CID who first proposed to the British War Cabinet in December 1914 that the pre-war plans should be put into operation as soon as possible.

The last thing on the minds of the Ottoman Turks was to wage war on Britain—for to have had this intention and to have entrusted England with such expert knowledge of the defences of the Turkish State would have been like the proverbial Turkey voting for Christmas.

The only aspect of Ottoman reorganisation entrusted by the Young Turks to the Germans was the army. The Turks saw this as a kind of insurance against being taken to the cleaners by the English and French and also as a kind of balancing act between the Powers to ensure that everyone was kept happy. And the Sultan still went as far as making Lord Kitchener a Lieutenant

General in the Ottoman army to reassure the British of their good intentions.

Britain's war on the Ottoman Empire

Enver's alliance with Germany was an alliance of last resort forced on the Turks by the gathering of hostile aggressors around the Ottoman territories who refused to be bought off with either goodwill or bribes and determined that Turkey be not allowed to remain neutral in the war.

In July 1914 the only intention of the Ottoman State was to survive the War. It knew that Britain had its eyes on grabbing the Arab parts of the Ottoman Empire and its ally Tsarist Russia wanted Constantinople. To protect its own survival Turkey remained neutral in the war and played for time by putting Germany off, when it became important for the Kaiser to gain allies, with a number of preconditions for a fully-fledged alliance.

It is argued by British historians that England desired Turkey to remain neutral in the war. However, there are serious weaknesses in this argument.

Firstly, whilst Turkey had little to gain in entering the war, it was necessary from the British and Russian position that the Ottoman Empire should be engaged in the conflict. How else was Constantinople to be got for the Russians?

Secondly, Britain began to engage in highly provocative behaviour towards the Turks. A major example of this was the seizure by Winston Churchill of two Turkish battleships being built by the Royal Navy that were being paid for by popular subscription. These was seized illegally and confiscated without compensation by the British—effectively signalling that the naval alliance with Turkey was over.

Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, who had been making the arrangement to hand over Constantinople to the Russians, set down British intentions toward Turkey in early October in an internal memo at the Foreign Office: "To delay the outbreak of war as long as we could, to gain as much time as we could, and to make it clear, when war came, that we had done everything to avoid war and that Turkey had forced it." (A.L. Macfie, *The Straits Question In The First World War*, Middle Eastern Studies, July 1983, p.49) So all along it was the British aim to make war on Turkey at an opportune time and blame the Ottoman Government for the breakdown in relations.

The opportunity of finding a cause of war against Turkey developed after the Royal Navy forced two German ships trapped in the Mediterranean into neutral Constantinople in early August. The German crews faced with the prospect of destruction if they re-entered the Aegean handed the ships over to the Turks. The Turks accepted them in place of the two battleships owed to them by Britain.

Churchill laid a blockade on the Dardanelles to prevent the ships coming out. This in itself was an act of war against Turkey. Then he organised a series of meetings in the first days of September to discuss a pre-emptive strike on Constantinople—to "Copenhagen" the city, as Nelson had done in destroying the Danish fleet in its port in neutral Denmark in 1801 before declaration of war. On the last day of October Churchill gave the order to "commence hostilities with Turkey" without informing the Cabinet or formally declaring war. The Royal Navy began bombarding the Dardanelles on 3rd November even before war was declared.

The occasion for the declaration of war was an obscure incident in the Black Sea where the two formerly German ships engaged Russian ships that were attempting to lay mines on the approaches to Constantinople to complete the blockade which the British had instituted at the other end of the Straits. The ships then engaged Russian guns at the port of Odessa where a Russian Army was being prepared for invasion of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian operation was designed to prevent the Turks from being able to reinforce their Eastern provinces via the Black Sea—something that was indispensable to Ottoman forces due to the lack of a road network toward Eastern Anatolia.

The Turks themselves waited another week to declare war on Britain when they found a British army coming up from Kuwait and heading for Baghdad. This British expeditionary force from India had been diverted two weeks before the British declaration of war on Turkey by secret order. Kuwait had supposedly been an independent principality in 1914 but it found itself with a sizable British army camped inside it and ready to expand the Empire into Mesopotamia.

It is clear that England's intention all along had been to engage the Ottoman Empire in war to destroy it and enable the Czar to get his heart's desire at Constantinople in return for his services in providing his steamroller against Germany.

The Gallipoli crusade

Gallipoli (or Canakkale, as the Turks call it) is virtually the only thing remembered in Ireland about the Great War on Turkey. It is an isolated and disconnected event in the memory because the Great War on Turkey is a forgotten event in Irish history. That is despite the fact that it was probably the most significant thing Ireland ever participated in—and undoubtedly the most disastrous.

Redmond did not bother to issue any declaration of war against Turkey, as he had against Germany, and he sought no electoral mandate to go off in pursuit of the new British war aims in the Middle East. And it was never questioned what these war aims were—whether they were part of the "war for small nations," or maybe for "democracy," or were they for the old style Imperial expansion that England had given up, according to the Redmondites?

The great extension of the war was simply fitted in with the previous struggle Redmond had pledged Ireland to with the result that Ireland fell into line with Imperial requirements, taking the addition of a new enemy and expansion of the war objectives in its stride and without asking any awkward questions about it all.

Irish soldiers who had enlisted in the British Army to defend "Little Catholic Belgium" and to "save civilization from the Hun" found themselves part of an invasion force to conquer Moslem lands and advance naked Imperialist objectives in the Middle East!

A reading of the main nationalist newspapers in the weeks after the extension of Ireland's war to the Turks suggests that the Home Rule leaders did not have the same enthusiasm for it as they did in taking on the Hun. The *Irish News* of Belfast commented on the departure of a large number of Irish recruits from Belfast on 12th February 1915 with the hope that they were going to "fight the Germans" rather than "the poor Turks."

In early 1915 Britain and France began the naval assault on the Straits that Hankey and the CID had planned nearly a decade before. It was beaten off with great bravery by the Turks. And so a combined naval and military invasion was launched.

A number of reasons have been given for the Dardanelles expedition and the Allied invasion of Turkey at Gallipoli. Churchill, First Lord of the British Admiralty, was inclined to open up a second front in the war against Germany, as an alternative to the stalemate that ensued on the western front since

the battle of the Marne and the costly war of attrition that had subsequently developed.

Churchill was against the war of concentration and attrition that Kitchener and the Unionists at the War Office, with their mass armies, were fighting in Europe. In his *'World Crisis'*, published in 1923, Churchill argued that he preferred a controlled and decisive escalation of the war in order to prevent the uncontrollable escalation that subsequently took place from the start of 1915.

There were two proposals for a second front: one involved a high-risk attack on the German coast, favoured by Admiral Fisher and the second, an assault on the Dardanelles, and then Constantinople, which would open up a new front in the Balkans and effectively put the Turks out of the war.

The reasons for the Dardanelles operation are found in the British accounts of the time. These reasons include the general strategic prize of the Straits, reopening communications with the Russian ally which had been closed by the war on Turkey, severing communication between the Ottomans and their allies in Europe, forcing the Balkan states into the war on the side of the *Entente*, re-establishing Christian dominance in Constantinople and overawing the Moslem world with the capture of its capital. And there was another objective: showing the 'lesser breeds' of the world that the white man was still the master—the vital issue of "prestige".

The Gallipoli invasion took place from April 1915. The Turks managed to pin the invaders down to the beaches—a position from which they were never able to break out, despite many attempts over the following months. By December it was realized in London that the invasion had been defeated and a humiliating evacuation was ordered, to Egypt and to Salonika in neutral Greece.

The Turkish victory at Gallipoli had the effect of greatly undermining the Irish supporters of Imperialism because it led to the replacement of the Liberal Government in London with a more Unionist coalition and Ireland, cheated out of Home Rule, began to turn toward Republican independence itself.

The British defeat led to the resignation of the First Sea Lord, Jackie Fisher, who had been opposed to the scheme from the start. Fisher's resignation was the trigger for a Unionist coup in May 1915 in which Liberal Ministers (including Churchill) were replaced by anti-Home Rule Unionists in the British Government. The Liberal Prime Minister Asquith was damaged and his days were numbered. The Home Rule Bill that had been placed on the Statute Book in August 1914, and which Redmond had treated as an Act, for the purposes of recruiting the soldiers that were to be sent to Gallipoli, was still-born. And from then a chain of events, beginning at Gallipoli, put paid to Redmondite Imperialism, the Irish Parliamentary Party and Home Rule Ireland.

War is a catastrophic activity. When a country signs up for war it can never be quite sure what it is buying into. And that is why the decision of the Redmondites to give England a blank cheque in August 1914 was so problematic.

Britain's Great War on Germany became an ever escalating war of Imperialist expansionism, taking on enemy after enemy and conquest after conquest. The Germans and Turks proved tougher nuts to crack than expected—and out of this came not Imperial Home Rule but ultimately, independent Ireland.

So in one way the great Turkish resistance at Gallipoli had the effect of moving Ireland more toward a demand for full freedom and anti-imperialism. And it was perhaps only fitting, then, that Irish Home Rule came to grief on the shores of Gallipoli.

Demise of Serbia

The demise of Serbia, the original 'cause' of the war, was hardly noticed in the great extensions that were going on of it.

Serbia had been the detonator for the local war with Austria which had been made into a wider European war provoked by Russian support for the Serbian 'rogue state,' backed by her ally, France. Having drawn Berlin in to defend Austria this was then the opportunity for Britain's Great War on Germany to be launched.

Then Serbia, having provided the great service of having been the detonator for the Great War was forgotten about for two years as she was overrun and destroyed.

During 1916, after the evacuation at Gallipoli and the transference of British forces to Salonika, there was a revival of interest in Serbia in England. By this time the Serbian army had suffered severe defeats and had gone into full retreat. A ''Serbian Sunday' was organised in London with Orthodox Priests and the Archbishop of Canterbury holding a joint service in St Paul's cathedral. The event was advertised with posters across London, with the heading: 'Think of Serbia, Pray for Serbia, Restore Serbia'.

Whilst Serbia was almost no more it strangely began to be re-imagined as Greater Serbia after the war and a case for rewarding the vanquished 'rogue state' with greater territory for services rendered to humanity was made. Not only was Serbia to be given a greater existence than it was in 1914 but it was to encompass peoples other than Serbs who could be incorporated into a greater Slavic state of the future.

The Yugoslav State that was constructed after the Great War included Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and was called The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, until 1929. The Croats would have preferred to remain part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but Britain decided to destroy this leaving the Croats with no choice but independence or being part of a South Slav State. The former option was closed off to them because of the irredentist promises made by Britain to the Italians to entice them into the war. In the secret 1915 Treaty of London the Croatian and Slovene coasts and hinterlands were awarded to the Italians. Only by joining with the Serbs were the Croatians and Slovenes able to resist the Italian expansion and preserve their territories.

And so Britain had another purpose for the Serbs after they had acted as the detonator of the Great War. They were to be part of the series of buffer-states manufactured in Eastern Europe in place of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to keep Germany from Russia and avoid the possibility of a future alliance developing between them.

The British and neutral Greece

Another forgotten aspect of the Great War is the fact that Britain violated Greek neutrality because the Greek government resisted its pressure to join its war on Turkey, and then invaded neutral Greece, overthrew its government, and installed a puppet government which declared war on the Ottoman Empire.

Irene Willis' *'England's Holy War'* has a chapter on 'The mobilisation of neutrals' which is very perceptive on why Liberal England showed such interest in the drafting in of neutral countries to fight in its Great War:

> "As the talk about conscription grew louder, the Liberals became increasingly interested in the mobilisation of other belligerents. The Conservatives were more concerned to conscript at home than abroad. But the Liberals' dislike of compulsion did not extend to unwillingness to see it operated in other countries. Neither did their aforetime interest in neutrality

and in the attempt to localise the conflict incline them to discourage interventionist movements in Italy, Rumania and Greece. On the contrary the Liberal Press was most active in advertising war fervour in these countries and in pointing out the moral and material advantages which would accrue upon their entrance into the war." (p.211)

Liberal England hesitated to compel in its own country and went looking for manpower elsewhere to wage its great moral war. And in looking for that manpower it went to the neutral countries of Europe, carrying the message to their people that this was a war of good versus evil that it would be morally inexcusable to abstain from. So compulsion to kill became a moral imperative in Liberal England's dealings with the small neutral nations of Europe.

In 1914 Britain offered Greece a sizable chunk of Turkey if it would declare war on Turkey. King Constantine, supported by his Chief of Staff, General Metaxas, refused the offer. Greece had recently doubled its size in the Balkan Wars and time was required for the consolidation of this extra territory.

However, Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister, had bigger ideas and ambitions on the lines of a new Byzantium in Asia Minor and he showed interest in the British offer. The very qualities that made Venizelos very dangerous to the Greek national interest endeared him to England.

The Greek War of Independence had had the effect of separating a large section of Greeks from the Greek State that was established in the 1830s. That presented the possibility of future Greek irredentist claims on parts of Turkey, which had the effect of creating a natural antagonism with the Ottoman Turks. The Greeks were spread right across the Ottoman Empire; from Greece itself, across the islands in the Aegean, to Constantinople, Asia Minor, and the Middle East. The Greek contribution to the Ottoman Empire had been substantial and the Greek communities benefited in many areas of commerce, shipping and linguistics as well as enjoying privileged positions with the Porte. But the division between the free Greeks and the large communities of Greeks still inhabiting parts of the Ottoman Empire had great implications for what happened to Greece between 1915 and 1922 since it inspired the dream of a "Greater Greece" taking in territories in Asia Minor at that point belonging to the Turks.

Venizelos argued that Greece would never be presented with an opportunity like the European War again to achieve its irredentist programme—the chance of fighting with so many powerful allies to gain a "Greater Greece" in Asia Minor.

King Constantine realised such a venture would be extremely unwise and, unlike his Prime Minister, he listened to military advice on deciding on military matters. The Chief of the General Staff, General Metaxas, who had been involved in compiling a report on taking and holding Western Asia Minor during the Balkan Wars, believed that such an enterprise would be beyond the Greek Army. (The General concluded that as the basis of a Greek colonial venture would be the gentle and effete commercial classes of Greeks and Armenians in the vicinity of the town of Smyrna, and they were surrounded by seven million hardy Turkish peasants, the long term prospects of survival of such a colony were not good.) So Constantine informed the *Entente* that in line with his policy of "benevolent neutrality" he would not fight Turkey unless Greece was attacked by her.

Britain took a statement made by Venizelos in the Greek parliament as an invitation to the Allies to invade neutral Greece and occupy Salonika. Britain held the attitude that it had made the modern Greek state in the 1830s through its military power and as such could use it as it wished in international affairs.

Under the Greek Constitution the King had the final say on external affairs and the King demanded the Premier's resignation. A new Government was formed after the resignation of Venizelos and this pledged to continue to uphold Greek neutrality—despite the presence of an Allied invasion force on its territory.

Britain then pointed the Royal Navy's guns at Athens, organised a naval blockade of Greece and seized the country's harvest. These actions produced a widespread famine in the neutral nation—and all under the guise of 'the war for small nations!'

Through these measures Britain finally succeeded in overthrowing the Greek Government, and installing its own Government with Venizelos as puppet.

These events ultimately led to the Greek tragedy in Anatolia because the puppet government under Venizélos, installed in Athens through Allied bayonets, was enlisted as a catspaw by Lloyd George to bring the Turks to heel after the Armistice in 1918 at Mudros. They were presented with the town of Smyrna first and then the Greeks, encouraged by Lloyd George, advanced across Anatolia toward where the Turkish democracy had re-established itself, at Ankara, out of range of the guns of the Royal Navy, after it had been suppressed in Constantinople.

Britain was using the Greeks and their desire for a new Byzantium in Anatolia to get Ataturk and the Turkish national forces to submit to the Treaty of Sèvres, and the destruction of not only the Ottoman State but Turkey itself.

But the Greek Army perished on the burning sands of Anatolia after being skilfully manoeuvred into a position by Ataturk in which its lines were stretched. And the ancient Greek population of Asia Minor fled on boats from Smyrna, with the remnants of their army, after Britain had withdrawn its support, because the Greek democracy had reasserted its will to have back its King.

The destruction of the Ottoman Empire

Britain's decision, taken in conjunction with its Russian, French and Greek allies, to break up the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, four centuries old Ottoman Empire, had catastrophic effects for the whole region that are still working themselves out today.

Our understanding of the Ottoman Empire is deeply coloured by the British Great War propaganda of Wellington House—a secret department of state set up to coordinate an ideological assault on the enemy, whoever they might be. The main purpose of this propaganda was to justify the *Entente* conquest of the Moslem lands of the Ottoman Empire whilst making a favourable impression in the US—which was assuming a greater importance as the Germans and Turks refused to buckle under the power of the *Entente*.

Wellington House saturated the Anglo-sphere with British propaganda that accused the Turks of being "a merciless oppressor", "remorseless bullies", "pure barbarians", "degenerate", and having "strewn the earth with ruins". (These are some phrases used about Turks in *'The Clean-fighting Turk, a Spurious Claim'*, a Wellington House publication, by Mark Sykes, the co-author of the secret agreement between England and France to carve Moslem territories up amongst the Christian Powers when the war was over. But they could have come from a hundred similar British publications from the period)

The message of this propaganda was that the demise of the Ottoman Empire was inevitable and far too long in coming.

And yet, the Ottoman Empire was, in fact, an amazingly successful and durable construction.

In the 14th Century the Turks had taken in hand the Moslem world and constructed it into a distinct entity that remained in existence for around 500 years. The Osman Turks or Ottomans overthrew the Eastern Roman Empire, capturing Constantinople in 1453, and established the city as their capital.

By the early nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire straddled three continents and stretched from Tunis in the West to Mesopotamia in the East, and from Rumania in the North down to Yemen in the South. It had a small population in relation to its size—only thirty-six million in 1830—but contained a wide diversity of races: Turks, Arabs, Egyptians, Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Albanians and Rumanians as well as a sizable number of Jews.

Constantinople, the object of the Gallipoli expedition, was a very cosmopolitan city, like the Empire itself. Around half its population was Moslem but it had large numbers of Armenians, Greeks and Jews, who dominated the commercial and financial life of the city and the Empire.

A constant theme of Western views of the Turks in the nineteenth century, when the Imperialist Powers wished to divest the Moslem State of its possessions, was that the Ottoman Empire was a more brutal place to live than Christian Europe.

The Ottoman Empire had been a tolerant multi-ethnic Empire for hundreds of years, in which different races and religions had lived side-by-side in comparative peace and harmony within the millet system. For instance, alone out of all the states in Europe at the time, the Ottomans accepted the entry and settlement of Jewish refugees fleeing from persecution so that these people could contribute their talents to the commercial life of the state.

The fluid and open Ottoman social system and society had the effect of encouraging refugees, to seek their fortunes in the Ottoman Empire rather than in the rigid and closed societies which existed in the West. The Ottomans built their Empire through the contributions of all the people they could attract to its service—Greeks, Armenians, Jews and Slavs.

The Ottoman Empire was immensely successful in incorporating the talents of its peoples in the Ottoman service (including its leadership)—for while the Empire was formally a Turkish one it seems to have been operated, and been utilised, by everyone else, in their own interest.

The Ottoman Turks absorbed peoples into their expanding Empire without eradicating the cultures of the people they conquered, and allowed them to continue to live their own lives, practice their own religions, and live within their own cultures without interference—whilst at the same time forming part of a very rich and diverse multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

However, the arrival of the Anglo-French and Russian invasion forces in May 1915 signalled the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and a general sorting out of its component populations who then had to fight and kill for survival.

The English exportation of Social Darwinist ideas of race homogeneity into the region as the ideal type for societies undermined the old heterogeneous Ottoman attitude toward race that had promoted 'live and let live' in the Ottoman Empire. And the promotion of nationalism in order to destabilise the Ottoman State made the multi-ethnic units impossible. Nationalism was a most unsuitable thing to promote in the region covered by a great patch-work of peoples, who were inter-mingled and were inter-dependent. Its promotion by the *Entente* Powers was as disastrous for the many Moslem communities of the Balkans and the Caucasus, who were driven from their homes of centuries, as it was for various Christian communities. The Moslems and the Christians fought each other after being caught up in the inevitable consequences of the simplifying process it encouraged.

The Armenian tragedy

The great reorientation of British foreign policy had serious consequences for not only the Ottoman Turks, Jews and Greeks but also for the Armenians. Prior to 1907 it was the Russians who wished to exploit the Armenians for political ends and the Armenians always had to consider the likelihood that if they rose in revolt Britain would restrain the Russians from taking advantage of the situation—and any uprising would be crushed without foreign help. The Russians complained that they were stopped from assisting the Armenians because of the Cyprus Convention of 1878 between Britain and the Ottoman Sultan. This guaranteed a British war on Russia if the Czar moved into Ottoman territory in return for Cyprus being occupied by Britain.

But this all changed in 1907. Under the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1907 England and Russia agreed an immediate partition of Persia between them and envisaged a future partition of the Ottoman Empire in which the eastern provinces would go to Russia and Mesopotamia would go to Great Britain. Later, once Russia had shown its commitment to the war on Germany, in the secret Constantinople agreement of March 1915, the Ottoman capital, which the British described as 'the greatest prize of the war', was awarded formally to the Tsar.

Russian annexation of the eastern Ottoman provinces became the common program of Great Britain and Russia alike.

In the spring of 1915 a number of events precipitated and provoked the Ottoman relocations of the Armenians that led to the great tragedy: the Gallipoli landings by the British and French, the invasion of eastern Anatolia by the Czarist forces, a large ambush in Zeytun by Armenian insurgents which resulted in the deaths of many Ottoman soldiers on the main supply route into Syria and the Armenian rebellion at Van, which resulted in a massacre of Moslems. In April, Lord Bryce and the 'Friends of Armenia' in London made a widely publicised appeal for funds to equip Armenian volunteers fighting behind Turkish lines.

In the period between the outbreak of war in Europe and before the declarations of war on the Ottoman Empire the Russians began arming the Armenians in preparation for invasion. The invading Russian armies brought with them Armenian groups armed with Allied weapons whose main purpose was to eliminate the Moslem populations. British and Russian agents circulated amongst the Armenians behind Turkish lines and provided them with weapons and money to enable them to create general disorder. In the Armenian capture of the city of Van and the general massacre of Moslems that followed Ottoman soldiers were diverted and prevented from reaching the front to fight the invading Russian forces. All these factors influenced the Ottomans to relocate the Armenian population from the area.

Even before 1915 Eastern Anatolia resembled a powder-keg. The Kurdish tribes were well armed and virtually sovereign in the areas they roamed. They and the Christian townsmen, bought arms from the Russians and frequent skirmishes occurred between different groups. The Russians flirted with using the Kurds as well as the Armenians as instigators of chaos in the region prior to the war. Order was only maintained by an Ottoman presence between the various elements. If that presence were removed, as it inevitably would in war-time, it was predictable as to what would occur.

By 1915 all previous restraint was removed from Russia and the Armenian nationalists' expectations soared. Mayhem abounded, instigated in the Ottoman territories by the *Entente* Powers to bring about its collapse and to facilitate the absorption of its parts into the empires of Britain, France and Russia. In a general war situation, which threatened the very existence of the state in which the Armenians lived and which forced them to

choose between it and their liberation by the Great Powers, catastrophe for either them or for local Moslems was always going to be the most likely outcome.

The breakdown in the Ottoman infrastructure and authority, caused by the British blockade and by the invading Allied armies, was the major factor in turning the position of Armenians and other Christian groups from being one of mainstays of the commercial infrastructure of the Ottoman Empire and a "*loyal community*", into a problematic and subversive element within the State. And, since the objective of the Allies was the destruction of the commercial life of the Ottoman State through invasion and blockade, what future, indeed, had the Armenians in it?

The Armenians, like other peoples in strategically important areas during 1914-18, found themselves being used as pawns in a new 'Great Game.' After being encouraged to insurgency and to try to form themselves into a national entity (which was never a practicality given their dispersion across Ottoman territories) they were quickly discarded and forgotten when their interests no longer coincided with those of their Great Power sponsors.

The Armenian nationalists relied upon external forces as the only means of creating an Armenian state within Ottoman territories. This was because they were a relatively small minority in Eastern Anatolia, constituting only about 1 in 6 of the population of the Ottoman lands they claimed. The population of the modern eastern provinces was such that a restoration of the old Armenian Kingdom was impossible without overcoming six centuries of history through the construction of a homogeneous Armenian State. That would, of necessity, have involved the ethnic cleansing of large numbers of Turks and Kurds and almost certainly have required a policy of genocide against them to achieve a functional and stable Armenia (At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference the area claimed for an Armenian State was gigantic and included territory as far west as Sivas and Adana).

The two main uses that Britain had for the Armenians were: firstly, to encourage American participation in the war (on account of its strong missionary activities in the area) and secondly, to cultivate and construct a case against the Ottomans in order to justify the incorporation of Moslem lands into the British Empire after the war.

These were the primary interests of Britain in them and not their well-being or that they should be governed well. That can be seen in the way Britain failed to press the Armenian case after they had acquired Mesopotamia and Palestine and how they put the Blue Book (Lord Bryce and Arnold Toynbee's account of the 'Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire') back on the shelf, for use on a future day.

After the Great War Britain had it in her power to bring about an Armenian state and to try those it had accused and detained in connection with the deaths of Armenians. But, despite attempting many things in the world that were immensely more difficult at the time it decided not to follow through with these two measures, as if it did not take the claims it made against the Turks as seriously as it pretended to, during the war.

T.P. O'Connor, one of the last remaining Irish Home Rulers left in the British Parliament after the Irish Party had been smashed by Sinn Fein in the 1918 General Election made a speech in the House of Commons during the debate on the Treaty of Lausanne. He made an impassioned plea for the establishment of an Armenian state in Anatolia, which, he said, had been abandoned in the Treaty signed by the British Empire with the resurgent Turks.

The bulk of O'Connor's speech was taken up with quotations expressing British support for the Armenians during the war and detailing the betrayal of the Armenians by the *Entente* after it. He credited the Armenians with having played a vital role in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

O'Connor said that, whilst the Ottomans attempted to retain the loyalty and service of the Armenians with generous concessions, England had used them in their destruction of the Ottoman State. And when the Armenians were no longer useful and Atatürk had established Turkey as a power to be reckoned with, the *Entente* just left them high and dry.

Britain and Zionism

The strategic reason for the alliance between British Imperialism and the Zionist Movement, which led to the Balfour Declaration in November 1917, lay in the British desire to enlist the support of International Jewry in the Great War effort against Germany, and then to manoeuvre itself into control of Palestine, by asserting the moral right of the Jews to settle there.

When England chose to destroy the Ottoman Empire in November 1914 it presented itself with a problem. The buffer zone that the Ottoman State represented for Britain between its possession of Egypt in the west and its Indian Empire in the east came up for grabs. Britain, whilst promising Constantinople to the Tsar, determined to take as much of the rest of the Ottoman territories as possible to secure this buffer zone against the other European Powers—which included both its allies, France and Russia, as well as its enemy, Germany.

However, the defeat of Turkey, like that of Germany, proved more difficult than was anticipated. And England found it had to make all kinds of promises to secure sufficient allies to tell against its enemies. The promises it made were conflicting and contradictory. But Britain knew that the only important thing was the winning of the war. So it determined to worry about what would happen about the promises later.

Britain's promise to the Zionists took the form of the Balfour Declaration which announced a Homeland for the Jews scattered about the earth—whether they liked it or not (and there was plenty of evidence that the vast majority had little interest in it). England imagined that it could use the Zionist ambition of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine as the basis of a British colony in the area to secure wider Imperial interests in the region—along with the parallel conquest of Mesopotamia/Iraq to the east.

The significant fact that is often overlooked today is that it was only the power of the British Empire that made the Zionist project possible. The British acted on Zionist solicitation but they did so both on Imperial terms and for Imperial purposes.

That it did not work out in the long run as Britain anticipated is beside the point—except for the Palestinians that is. They continue to pay the price for England's Imperial ambitions in the Middle East—ambitions that proved unsustainable as the Empire over-reached itself in seeing off the German and the Turk.

The Zionists proved an important ally for England in its maneouverings against the French to whom Britain had promised the territory of Palestine, as part of Syria, in the secret Sykes/Picot Treaty.

Through adoption of the Zionist programme Britain managed to detach Palestine from Syria and, as a consequence, Palestine from the French, by Britain taking special responsibility for the future of the Jews. This had the effect of trumping the French historical claim to Syria through the English moral claim to be the guardians of the new Jewish homeland as indicated in the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

English Liberals were the driving force behind the Imperial plans for Zionism. Under the influence of Herbert Sidebotham, a prominent Liberal journalist, and C.P.Scott, the influential

editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, there developed a Manchester school of Zionism. The leaders of Jewish nationalism in England, Dr. Weizmann and Harry Sacher (also of the *Manchester Guardian*), were from Manchester and the city became the hub for an Imperial Zionist project.

Sidebotham wrote the first book in support of the Balfour Declaration published in England by an English political writer *'England and Palestine: Essays towards the Restoration of the Jewish State'*. Sidebotham, a famous journalist on the *Manchester Guardian* and a member of the British Palestine Society, had the purpose of establishing a "community of ideals and interests between Zionism and British policy." He was also a Secretary to Lloyd George and explained in his book that the British colonisation policy would, of necessity, involve non-British subjects in Palestine from the world-wide population of Jews.

Jews did not want to particularly want to live in Palestine before the Balfour Declaration. In fact, many lived in the Ottoman Empire with little desire for Zion. The 5th 'Herbert Samuel' lecture is significant in this revelation partly because of the (Jewish) audience to whom it was being addressed:

> "The Jews might suffer terrible persecutions and pogroms in Russia or Poland; but somehow when they left, with the Holy Land on their lips, their feet carried them resolutely in the other direction, to Germany or England or America. Even when, like the expelled Sephardim of Spain, they went to the hospitable, tolerant Turkish empire, that land of promise as it seemed in the sixteenth century, it is odd how few of them went to Palestine, which was after all an easily accessible and under-populated part of that empire. There was a trickle, but not a stream. To most of them Constantinople, with its opportunities of government finance, or Salonika, with its opportunities of army-provisioning, seemed more tempting than what Gibbon was to call the 'mournful and solitary silence' of Arab Palestine" (20.10.1961, p.14-15).

Salonika, in Macedonia, was part of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, before it was captured by the Greeks in the First Balkan War. It was a very ethnically diverse city, made up of Turks, Jews, Greeks, Macedonians and Bulgarians and was regarded as the greatest Jewish city in Europe because the Jews practically owned it and ran its civic and commercial life. It contained a large Jewish proletariat, who were of a strongly socialist disposition, as well as a Jewish commercial bourgeoisie.

The Ottomans had welcomed the Sephardic Jews to Salonika, and other cities in the Empire, when they were expelled from Spain at the end of the 15th century (and Jews who fled Portugal slightly afterwards). And Salonika was the main area of the Dunmehs (from the Turkish, 'to turn'), Jews who converted to Islam during the seventeenth century.

Baghdad was also the home to 50,000 Jews in 1917, a fifth of the population of the city. Arnold Wilson, Political Officer with the Mesopotamian Expedition, recorded the effect of the Balfour Declaration (or lack of it) on the Jewish community there in his memoirs:

> "The announcement aroused no interest in Mesopotamia; nor did it leave a ripple on the surface of local political thought in Baghdad, where there had been for many centuries a large Jewish population… I discussed the declaration at the time with several members of the Jewish community, with whom we were on friendly terms. They remarked that Palestine was a poor country, and Jerusalem a bad town to live in. Compared with Palestine, Mesopotamia was a Paradise. 'This is the Garden of Eden,' said one; 'it is from this country that Adam was driven forth—give us a good Government and we will make this country flourish—for us Mesopotamia is a home, a national home to which the Jews of Bombay and Persia and Turkey will be glad to come. Here shall be liberty and with it opportunity! In Palestine there may be liberty, but there will be no opportunity.'" (*Loyalties, Mesopotamia, 1914-1917*, pp.305-6)

In making war on the Ottoman Empire, and in pursuing the Zionist objective, the British Empire not only destroyed the prosperous and content Jewish communities across the Ottoman possessions but also sowed the seeds for generations of conflict with the local inhabitants of Palestine who would find themselves the chief victims of this great act of conquest and ethnic cleansing.

Christian Fundamentalism and the Great War

The Balfour Declaration appeared for the first time in public view in the *Time*s on 9th November 1917—a month before the capture of Jerusalem. This momentous announcement was produced from behind closed doors and was never debated in Parliament. Its timing was important. To have made it earlier would certainly have had a disorganising effect on the Arabs who were doing much of the fighting for Britain against the Turks.

On December 9th Jerusalem fell to the British. The event was treated in England at the time as the major event of the War. Lloyd George imposed a news embargo on reporters until he could announce the news to the House of Commons (in those days Parliament was still important). And to celebrate the liberation of the Holy City from the Moslem after 730 years the bells of Westminster Abbey rang for the first time in three years and they were followed by thousands of others across England.

General Allenby, the liberator of Jerusalem, and a descendent of Cromwell, declared in Jerusalem that the Crusades were over. On hearing him, the Arabs, who had been encouraged into fighting for the British and who had been fooled into seeing them as liberators, wandered away. And many of them have found themselves wandering ever since.

Allenby carried two books with him to Palestine. The first was *'Historical Geography of the Holy Land'* by Sir George Adam Smith, Professor of Old Testament Studies at Glasgow, which had been recommended to him by Lloyd George. The other was the *Bible*, which he read every day, and consulted—to draw historical information from in informing his movements.

There are a considerable amount of reminiscences produced by those British Officers who fought to liberate the Holy City. One such is the memoirs of Major Vivian Gilbert, published in 1923, under the title of *'The Romance of the Last Crusade—With Allenby to Jerusalem'*. It opens with a piece about King Richard the Lionheart and Sir Brian de Gurnay riding away from Jerusalem after their failure to capture the city: "In the heart of Sir Brian de Gurnay was the thought of another and a Last Crusade that for all time should wrest the Holy Places from the Infidel." (p.1.) Major Gilbert and a host of other Englishmen saw themselves in this vision.

As the British advanced into Jerusalem many of them began to see themselves as taking part in the final Crusade—forgetting all about the "war for small nations". All the Old Testament fundamentalism imbued in English gentlemen by their Biblical education in the Public Schools came flooding out in a great surge, as they re-conquered the Holy Land for Christendom after 700 years of Moslem occupation.

What created the impulse for the establishment of the Jewish Colony in Palestine was this English Christian fundamentalism. During the nineteenth century a Christian Zionist impulse had developed within the Nonconformist wing of Protestantism in

England. This English Christian Zionism actually predated the Zionism of Jewish nationalists. It developed from Bible reading. As early as the 17th August 1840 an editorial in the *Times* called for a Jewish Homeland in Palestine.

Christian Zionism then worked its way into the political classes of the British State as the Nonconformists came to political power and it became part of the political culture of Liberal England despite the fact that Darwinism seemed to undermine the religious impulse toward the end of the century.

The English Puritans who dominated the Liberal Party, and Tory High Church Evangelicals, were always strongly inclined toward the *Old Testament* part of the *Bible*—much more so than Catholics, who had their priests to shield them from it. Their *Bible* reading bred a familiarity with, and imbued a strong interest in, reviving the Holy Land and creating a new Jerusalem. And there was another factor that exerted a gravitational pull on England from the Holy Land: Since the break with Rome the English Church had lacked a spiritual home. The Catholic Church had rebuilt the spiritual home of Christianity in Rome, but when Henry VIII made himself pope of the English he had to be content with Canterbury. The more the English Protestants read their Bibles the more they yearned for their own spiritual home—in the original Holy Places of Judea and Samaria. And what could be more of a riposte to Rome than to expose its spiritual inauthenticity by trumping it with the original article.

And then there was the notion, encouraged by reading the Old Testament that a Second Coming of Christ depended upon the return of the scattered Jews to the lands of their ancestors. So what happened to the Holy Land came to matter to Christian fundamentalist England since great Messianic promises and millenarian predictions depended upon it.

There was nothing ridiculous in the belief (and desire) that Imperial power could be used to bring about an end to history and the Second Coming. It made all the other pointless destruction and slaughter that the Great War entailed palatable for the spiritual classes.

Lloyd George, the Prime Minister who authorised the Balfour Declaration, was raised by an uncle, a lay preacher in a millenarian Baptist Church, and "was brought up in a school where there was taught far more about the history of the Jews than the history of my own land." His biographer John Grigg described how the Prime Minister "had been brought up on the bible, and the story of the ancient Jews was as familiar to him as the history of England… the idea of reuniting the Jewish people with the land of their forefathers appealed to him."

In 1903, when just an ordinary MP, Lloyd George had drawn up a Jewish Colonisation Scheme for Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement. The colony was meant for British East Africa but by 1917 the real thing became possible with the conquest of the Ottoman territories and Lloyd George was in the position to realise it.

Anti-Semitic Zionism

A significant element of British support for Zionism lay in English anti-Semitism. That seems a rather contradictory statement to make but it makes perfect sense when thought about.

In 1905 The Aliens Act established the first Immigration control in Britain. It was aimed specifically at preventing the entry of Russian and East European Jews, fleeing Tsarist oppression, into the country. It was said that the flamboyant display of Jewish wealth in Park Lane had offended English Upper Class sensibilities and prompted the Act. The Prime Minister and author of it was none other than the same man responsible for the Balfour Declaration, Arthur Balfour. Anti-Semitism and Zionism were no strangers to each other.

I read somewhere that Herzl once said that the chief asset of the Zionist Movement's campaign for a Jewish Homeland was anti-Semitism. I think that that statement is indisputably demonstrated by the behaviour of the British State towards the Jews from 1916 on to the 1930s. It was this anti-Semitism that led to the Balfour Declaration and which made Zionism into a going concern.

A number of British writers proclaimed at the time that the Jews had been a significant element in the vigour and success of German commerce prior to the Great War and they determined to remove the Jews from this useful function in German life (This is a feature of John Buchan's famous Richard Hannay novels). Germany was the closest thing that the Jews had to a homeland in 1914 and many found refuge there after the pogroms directed against them by Britain's ally, Russia.

The British Ambassador to Constantinople before the war, Sir Gerald Lowther wrote a report for Sir Edward Grey in May 1910. The report goes on, for page after page, about Jewish influence here, there and everywhere in the Ottoman Empire and the nefarious schemes of the Jews in wishing to create a Jewish state in Palestine and Mesopotamia in return for the financial help of Jewish finance to the Young Turks. And in one part it even recommends an alliance with the Arabs—who, it suggests, would have the most to lose from this despicable conspiracy.

These views were widespread in the British Embassies. During the war itself Britain's Ambassadors bombarded London with dispatches about the sinister power of the Jews being exercised on the German behalf. George Buchanan, Ambassador in Petrograd complained of the "large number of Jews in German pay acting as spies during the campaign in Poland" against the Russian Ally. In the correspondence of the British Ambassador at Washington, Cecil Spring Rice, between 1914 and 1917 there are continual references to the Jews as German agents (e.g. "the pro-German Jewish bankers toiling for our destruction." See Mark Levene, *The Balfour Declaration: A Case Of Mistaken Identity*, English Historical Review, January, 1992) and the character of the views expressed can only be described as Anti-Semitic.

It was also noted in Imperialist periodicals that Jews played a prominent role in international finance and the international communist movement. The gist of the understanding was that they were dangerous loose cannons in the world of nations who needed to find their correct range by being given a national project.

So the British offer of a homeland in Palestine presented a means of taming and 'turning' the Jew from his German, internationalist/socialist proclivities in the world, to being harnessed to more progressive, nationalist and British Imperial, purposes.

But where would all of this leave the large Jewish communities which would remain outside Palestine in a Europe of post-war nationalisms in which they could not fit?

The Jews were the middle class of the Austrian Empire. They could not be the middle classes of the new nationalist states. And the undeveloped native middle classes, who had not created their states through their own efforts, set about ousting the Jews from their dominant position in commercial and academic life when they were placed in power.

The great surge of anti-Semitism that gripped Europe after the Great War came in these new states set up by Britain and France out of the Hapsburg Empire at Versailles. In these

concoctions of the Imperial Powers the Jews began to be seen as anti-nationalist elements and they were treated accordingly by the new nationalist bourgeoisies during the 1920s and 1930s.

At the same time the indigenous Arab people of Palestine began to be treated by the Jewish nationalists, under the aegis of the Imperial Power, in a similar fashion.

This was a natural outcome of the Imperial scheme to turn the European Jews into a nationality with their own nation-state, along with the concocting of new 'nations' in Europe in which the Jews had no place.

Britain, in the ecstatic confidence of supreme Imperial power in the moment of victory, imagined that it could shape the Jews into a subordinate colonial nationality to serve its interests, using them as a "*little loyal Jewish Ulster*" in the Middle East. It found it was mistaken. In 1948 it made a humiliating submission to the naked terrorism of the Jewish colony it had planted in Palestine, and left the Palestinians to their fate.

Triple-cross of the Arabs

Both Jew and Arab were used by Britain in the Great War against Turkey and they have suffered for it to the present day.

There was some local discontent amongst Arabs at the centralizing of the Young Turk government. However, the Arabs had never been nationalists on any appreciable scale prior to British attempts to make them rebel against the Ottoman Empire.

Britain bombarded the Arab region with nationalist propaganda to stir up enmity against the Turks when its initial military assault failed to sweep aside the Turks in 1914-15. It succeeded in raising an Arab Nationalist army in 1916-17 through the efforts of Colonel Lawrence. Then some British Imperialists came up with the idea of making the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein, into a new Caliph of the Sunni Moslem world in order to control the region. Hussein was flattered by the British and in 1915 the Arab Revolt began when he was promised an independent Arab state up to Syria in return for his help in destabilizing the Ottoman Empire.

Britain desired a belt of territory between Arabia and what might be left of Turkey and would not permit a Foreign Power to occupy the area next to Egypt and the Suez Canal. So it decided on the partition of the Ottoman Empire between the Imperialist Powers with itself occupying the most important strategic area. This option was seen as having the advantages of: providing Britain with freedom of commerce, a granary and oil reserves in Mesopotamia in which an Indian colony could be established; and the chance of detaching the Southern part of Syria (Palestine) from Turkey (and France) to construct a buffer zone linking up the Indian Empire to Egypt.

At the same time as it entered into a Treaty with Shereef Hussein promising him a great Arab state England began making secret treaties with the French (The Sykes/Picot Agreement of May 1916) which sought to divide up the Middle East amongst the Western Christian Powers after the War was won.

Under this Agreement Russia was to have the Dardanelles, Constantinople and a large area around Erzurum and Trebizond. France was to get Cilicia and Lebanon, above Acre, whilst the vilayet of Mosul, north of Mesopotamia, the areas of Syria, were to be included in a large "Arab State A", under French control. England was to have the vilayets of Basra and Baghdad, and a large tract of land stretching from Kirkuk in the north down past Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf and west to the Jordan, called "Arab State B". Palestine was to become a condominium of England, France and Russia.

Hussein and the Arabs knew nothing of this Agreement. It aimed to balkanise the region so that the Moslems could not operate a state that would amount to anything. This plan of nationalist balkanisation was a most unsuitable way to administer the region because divisions within the Arab world were not national in any way. They were religious and cultural. But the different religions and cultures were spread right across the region and could not be delineated by national boundaries or through nation states drawn out of the sand.

That was why the Ottoman structures worked—because they enabled different religious groups, clans and families with different cultures, ways of life and allegiances to live next to each other with no lines in the sand to bother them.

When the lines in the sand were imposed on the Arabs they were forced to see themselves as nationalities, (but with no historical meaning) and to see others (who had the same history, religion or culture as themselves) as alien and a threat, because they were from without the newly imposed lines in the sand.

When the Bolsheviks took power in Russia in October 1917 they published the secret treaties from the Tsar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Amongst those were the texts of the Sykes/Picot Agreement. Upon obtaining these the Turks forwarded copies to Hussein with an offer of forgive and forget and a separate peace.

The Ottomans gave the fullest publicity to the peace offer to Hussein and it raised doubts in the Sheriff's mind as to the wisdom of his alliance with the British. When he contacted his Allies he was told that the treaties were not concluded agreements but simply records of provisional exchanges and conversations from the early part of the War to avoid any disagreements at the conclusion. The English assured Hussein that the Arab Revolt had altered the situation completely and made the Sykes/Picot Agreement null and void.

This reply proved enough for Hussein although it was obviously designed to deceive him, evading the issue of whether or not it was true that the Allied Powers had concluded secret agreements affecting the future disposal of Arab countries. It put the evasion in language which implied that no such agreements had been concluded. And Hussein's innocent faith in British standards of fair play did the rest.

Hussein was in for another shock. One part of the territory he had been expecting in his Arab State, Palestine, had not only been earmarked for the European Powers but, unbeknown to the leader of the Arab Revolt, it was also meant to become a homeland for another people—who would return to displace the Arabs already living there.

Hussein was to find out, just like John Redmond, that it was dangerous to place trust in British promises, particularly in verbal ones. But like Redmond he had the greatest trust in the goodwill of his patrons, despite all the evidence they offered to the contrary in their actions. That was because, like Redmond, when one joined with Britain in a compact there was great difficulty in going back.

The conquered Middle East, which had lived without the need for nationalist passions in the Ottoman Empire, was thus Balkanised by Britain and France without regard to the views of the inhabitants. The Arabs, as a consequence, found themselves the victims of a great British triple-cross. They were encouraged to rise against the Turks, by Colonel Lawrence, with the promise of a great independent Arab state after the War. And then they found this state had been secretly divided between the British and French, and Palestine declared to be a Jewish homeland—all without the wishes of the actual inhabitants being taken into account.

When the Arab nationalist movement declared its independence as an Arab state in 1918-19, it was crushed by the British, who had stirred it up in the first place, and by the French to whom the British had allocated Syria/Lebanon. And they found Palestine allocated to the Zionist movement for Jewish colonisation and the eventual formation of a Jewish state.

The fruit of the *Balfour Declaration*, and of the maze of deception that was British Middle East policy in the Great War, is what is now called *The War On Terror*.

Britain and Iraq

Prior to August 1914 it was believed in ruling circles in England that nations had been seen off and the future was Imperial. The general thrust of British Imperial thinking prior to the Great War was that small nations were giving way to the Imperial super-state and the whole world was coming within its sway, in an inevitable progression of history. Most parts of the earth would become part of the British, French, Russian Empires or the great expansionist state of the US.

Only the Ottoman Empire, which was not a real empire at all in the British sense, remained as an anomaly in this historical process.

But then came the Great War, and in order to bring Liberal England with it the Government raised the rallying cry for small nations. And Nations and Nationalism were to have another innings, after all. Mesopotamia, which had been earmarked as a mere extension of the Indian Empire began to be made into a British puppet-state.

Arnold Wilson's colonial administration originally aimed at a simple absorption of Mesopotamia into the Empire. This at least had the benefit of letting things be to a considerable extent, subject to gradual alteration. But Britain now decided to go for the worst of all solutions, the Middle East and cobbling together two and three-quarter vilayets of the Ottoman Empire (Baghdad, Mosul and most of Basra) to make up a new nation-state of Iraq.

Although the peoples of these vilayets had lived side by side in relative peace within the large Ottoman entity there was no sense of unity amongst the Sunni, Shia and Kurdish inhabitants and they were now simply to be combined in the strategic interest of Britain.

In the heady atmosphere of the Great War British ambitions became unlimited and it was concluded that because the main area of importance for Britain in the Middle East was the Persian Gulf and that Basra was essential to the control of the Gulf, and Baghdad was important in relation to Basra, and that Mosul had to be taken to protect the area north of Baghdad, and Persia had to be controlled to the Eastern flank, and to the West the acquisition of Palestine was essential to protect Mesopotamia, and Egypt, and the Suez Canal, and on and on…

The British conquest Mesopotamia and establishment of Iraq was another consequence of the Great War on Turkey. In this conquest Britain put together an unstable mix of peoples in the strategic interests of the Empire, and for the oil of Mosul.

Originally the intention was to just incorporate the Basra region into British India to create a new buffer to replace the Ottoman buffer. However, the Imperial forces decided to expand this buffer more and more to the North, and even tried to push it into northern Persia and the Caucasus, once the Czarist State began to collapse. However, after the Great War, Britain, whilst it obtained a great amount of territory found it almost impossible to govern this territory in an effective manner.

This was because of two reasons. Firstly, there was so much propaganda produced about fighting the war for small nations and democracy that the old naked imperialism was very difficult to justify in the aftermath of the war. Too many people had been affected by this propaganda and also it was very difficult to quietly abandon it because by 1917 America had to be encouraged to join the war against Germany to save the allied war effort. America did not want to sacrifice its soldiers against Germany just so that the French and British could expand their empires in Asia.

The new state of Iraq was born in British violence and deception. A mandate was set up, which established indirect British control through a monarchy set up by Britain, under the pretence of nationhood. Sir Percy Cox came from Persia to rig an election by kidnapping the opposition candidate in order to maintain British control over a puppet imported to maintain Imperial hegemony. In doing this a precedent and template for violence and electoral manipulation in Iraqi politics was established by Britain that has persisted to the present.

The Great Fraud that the British were perpetrating in Mesopotamia prompted the *Irish News* of Belfast to say the following in its editorial of August 20th 1920 about what Britain was calling the 'little war' in Mesopotamia:

> "It is not a 'little war' but a desperate struggle between an army of invaders and a people 'rightly struggling to be free' that is now raging in Mesopotamia… The people are nearly all Arabs—men in whose hearts the passion for freedom burns with traditional intensity… When British forces invaded Mesopotamia, in pursuance of the Allies campaign against Germany's Eastern ally, the late Sir Stanley Maude issued a famous 'Proclamation' to the people of Baghdad, announcing in high-blown and gorgeous Oriental phraseology that he and his troops had come as deliverers, and that Mesopotamia was to be freed forever from the Turkish yoke and constituted an independent State. The Mesopotamians believed Sir Stanley Maude; they helped him to complete the task of destroying Turkish power; they guided and fed his armies, and fought side by side with the 'deliverers.' The Turks were driven out; the British took possession of the country; and they proceeded to fasten on the people's necks a yoke of slavery more galling than that of the defeated Sultan… the English are slaughtering the Mesopotamian Arabs and these sons of the desert are hitting back so shrewdly that a war of serious dimensions is proceeding—and the fact cannot be hidden any longer. Point '9' of President Wilson's vanished '14' Points provided that 'non-Turkish nationalities in the Ottoman Empire should be assured of autonomous development.' England and France publicly accepted this 'Point' amongst the others. No sooner was peace declared than the process of enslavement and apoliation were begun in Western Asia… The history of the Western Alliance since the signing of the Armistice is a continuous chapter of shameless, blood-guilty 'breaches of faith.' All the lands between Mesopotamia and Ireland have been foully betrayed…"

The "*war for small nations*" began to be proved to be a Great Fraud, right across the world.

Another *Irish News* editorial of 5th August 1920, *'Treachery's Harvest'*, gives food for thought to the present day celebrators of Ireland's "common sacrifice" in the Great War. Simply put it blames Britain and its Great War for the twentieth century:

> "The cup of the English Coalition Government's iniquities is full to overflowing. Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues were returned to power on false pretences by the excited and deluded British people in December 1918. During the brief intervening period the victors in that frenzied General Election have betrayed the vital principles on which the hopes of all nations were based after the war, flouted their own professions, made useless—and worse—the sacrifice of millions of human lives, and hustled the

peoples of the world to the verge of ruin. Another month may see ruin irretrievably brought on Europe and Asia if the hands of those enemies of mankind are not stayed… From Ireland in the West to China in the East countless millions groan and tremble under the evils wrought by Great Britain's rulers… The 'Old World' is a unit in misery now. The same causes that produced 'pogroms' and riots… are directly responsible for chaos and confusion in Germany, for the greater part of the horrors that devastate Central Europe, for Poland's impending fate, for chaos in Egypt and India, for bloody strife in Syria and Mesopotamia, and for the train of events that are turning China and Japan into discontented and ambitious multitudes who may become a direful menace to Christianity and civilisation any day."

I don't suppose that the *Irish News* would have described it as *'Our War'* in 1920 as the Irish Great War enthusiasts do today. To claim ownership or any degree of responsibility for such a catastrophe by those who were experiencing its effects would have been madness. But it shows how far Ireland has come since then.

To claim the Great War a*s 'Our War'* would have been extremely foolish in 1920 by those living through its effects and who knew it as a Great Fraud perpetrated on them and countless others across the globe.

Part 4

The endgame and after

The US declared war on Germany and Austro-Hungary in 1917, although it never actually declared war on Turkey. Questions were asked in Congress about the obvious omission of not taking on the Turks as an enemy but no satisfactory answer was ever given. So it has to be concluded that America viewed the war on Turkey as outside the one it had joined—as an Imperialist one which the US wanted to avoid getting its hands dirty with. And this is confirmed by the American refusal to have anything to do with the Mandates Britain attempted to foist on it in the region after the War when the US passed on being implicated in land grabbing.

The US remained neutral in the Great War between 1914 and 1916. So when it joined the conflict it insisted that it was fighting a different war from the one it had abstained from previously. So it made out that the character of the war Germany was fighting, rather than the war itself, had brought America into the conflict. So, as a result of the US entry the character of the Allies' War also changed.

In late 1917, after the collapse of its Russian ally, England was crying out for American cannon-fodder for the Western front while, at the same time, many of its own resources of men and materials were being employed in gaining territory for the British Empire in Mesopotamia and Palestine. So a multitude of diplomats and propagandists were sent across the Atlantic to convince the Americans that the two campaigns were really part of the same war the US had signed up to, to dispel any worries on the part of Americans that they were supporting naked Imperialism.

The US entry into the war came about because the political and economic interests of America determined that it should join it. Before the war America had been a debtor to Britain, owing her about £50 million a year in interest. But America had reversed this balance in 1914 by following Britain's centuries old practice of selling a considerable portion of her exports by lending credit to the British to purchase US goods.

The US made Britain financially dependent upon it—largely through J.P.Morgan's banking empire—by giving the British the necessary credit to buy American munitions and equipment to keep waging its war. Whilst this factor helped America in the medium term to undermine the British Empire's power and replace it on the world stage it also tended to place the US in the position of having to make a necessary defence of its investments if there was danger of its client going under with its debts unpaid. By 1916 France and Russia were broke and London was paying for the sustaining of the war largely on American credit.

The US entry into the war in 1917 gave Britain hope that it could finish the job it started without having to negotiate a peace with evil. But it also had an effect on the character of the conflict, complicating the Balance of Power and war of Imperial expansion Britain and its allies were waging.

Benedict's Peace Note

The likely US intervention produced another peace initiative from Pope Benedict.

Benedict held out hopes that US influence could help him stop the war—hopes that were dashed in April 1917 when America declared war on Germany and her allies. From then on Benedict was on his own. But it was at this moment that the Pope produced his greatest initiative to end hostilities—the Peace Note of 1917.

With America's resources fully available to the *Entente* and President Wilson removed as a moral opponent—in that he couldn't talk about 'an honourable peace' anymore—it is not so difficult to understand why the Pope's Peace Note of 1917 came at an unwelcome time for Britain.

The Pope's Peace Plan had, by necessity, its origins within the German side—since it was the Germans, rather than the *Entente*, who desired a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The *Times* called it the "*German Peace Move*" in its editorial at the time.

There was nothing odd about Germany wanting peace at this of all moments—at the time of its greatest success in the war. It had launched its own peace initiative in December 1916 only to be rebuffed by the *Entente*.

Germany had secured its defence by a military ability that the *Entente* had not bargained for. But it knew that from here on only a long and wasteful war of attrition could defeat it. It wanted to secure a peace at this point to prevent further loss of life and the inevitable political and economic destruction that a fight to the finish would result in across Europe. So a number of elements in Germany supported the Vatican's efforts in going for a negotiated settlement.

Benedict believed Germany was the key because, in its strong military position, it could make the concessions necessary to satisfy Allied demands.

The Pope's effort was preceded by an initiative of Emperor Charles of Austria in early 1917. In Germany, a group led by the Catholic politician, Matthias Erzberger, passed a peace resolution in the *Reichstag* in July 1917.

The German offer did not make any demand for retaining the occupied areas of Belgium or France. The German peace proposal seemed to offer possibilities, and the Vatican envoy to Germany, Eugenio Pacelli, (later Pope Pius XII), who conducted most of the Vatican's peace efforts during the War, was sent to explore with the Kaiser and his Chancellor, Bethman-Hollweg, what terms might be feasible. The Germans agreed in principle to a limitation of armaments, withdrawal from Belgium and other occupied areas, disputed territories being decided by international agreement and the creation of international arbitration courts.

Having achieved an understanding with the Germans, Benedict drew up his Peace Note to all the belligerent Powers, setting out systematic proposals for bringing the war to an end and securing a just and enduring peace.

The Germans and the Austro-Hungarians were largely favourable to the Pope's proposal, although Berlin avoided specific commitments until the *Entente* had responded.

There were two views in Germany as to what should be done in mid-1917. One view was to go all out for peace on the basis of Benedict's plan because things could only get worse for Germany. The other, held by some Prussian military leaders, like Ludendorff and Hindenburg, argued there was no way out of the situation but through a spectacular military victory—as the *Entente* would never make peace until they were decisively beaten. There was much to encourage this latter viewpoint in 1917, with the Russian enemy collapsing, and if a blow could be struck in the West with transferred troops before American numbers arrived peace might be achievable on German terms.

The attitude of the *Entente* to Benedict's peace note determined that this latter view won out in Germany, which went for a last throw of the dice in the Spring of 1918.

The new Provisional Russian Government welcomed the Papal mediation. But the leaders of France and Italy wanted a fight to the finish to achieve their territorial aims, as set out in the secret treaties. But they hesitated to take direct issue with the Pope in view of his moral influence on their peoples. So France ignored the initiative. The British merely acknowledged it and then decided to let Wilson answer for all of them.

President Wilson had a unique role in rejecting the peace—that of giving the proceedings of the Allies the character and tone of disinterested ideals of justice and liberty. By 1917, a lot of the gloss had gone off the *Entente* propaganda. But Wilson gave the war a new aura of idealism just as the early idealism was fading. He projected the war as a struggle to make the world safe for democracy. Lloyd George played along, referring to a Wilson pro-war speech as "one of the greatest sermons in the history of the world."

Wilson, himself, saw the timing of the Pope's message as mischievous. Socialists had just convened a peace conference in Stockholm to appeal over the heads of rulers to the workers of the world. In Petrograd, the Bolshevik wing of the Russian revolution had already called for peace on the basis of no annexations and self determination for all peoples.

Wilson's reply to the Pope suggested, in effect, that the Great War was now all about regime change, establishing democracy in Germany, and nothing else. That notion suited the *Entente* as propaganda for the moment, and later served the purpose of enticing Germany into an Armistice.

Colonel House, Wilson's representative in Europe, used Benedict's Peace Note to attempt to get the *Entente* to give up their Secret Treaties and declare their war aims in the idealistic framework set by the President. But House was frustrated at every turn by Lloyd George and his French and Italian allies.

The Peace of No Peace

America's entry into the war and Wilson's moral rejuvenation of the Allied cause put paid to Benedict XV's Peace Note which was the last chance Europe had of averting catastrophe. The shape of things to come in the world was largely determined by the Entente rejection of it.

Had sincere peace negotiations along the lines proposed by Benedict XV taken place, the result would have been the "peace without victory", which was Wilson's statesmanlike position early in 1916 when the US was officially neutral. There would have been a negotiated peace treaty made by relative equals—militarily demonstrated by the stalemate in the war.

A negotiated peace would have saved the world from the last catastrophic years of war. It would have rendered unnecessary and impossible the brutal blockade of Germany, that was continued for months after the Armistice of November 1918—a blockade that starved to death hundreds of thousands of German women and children and set German eyes on the Ukraine as a future food source. And it would also have made impossible the rise of Bolshevism, Fascism and National Socialism—all products of the disintegration effected by the war and blockade—and the coming of a second world war.

But Britain did not want an alternative moral force in international affairs. It wanted to maintain itself as the moral force in the world by winning the war and determining the post-war outcome.

And it wanted to use its force of arms unilaterally in future, just as it always had, when and where it thought fit, and not let any international body tell it to do otherwise—as it demonstrated by its treatment of the League of Nations in the 1930s.

Britain also did not wish to restore the conquered territory it was grabbing from Germany in Africa, or that it had taken from the Ottomans in the Middle East. It wanted to impose indemnity on Germany to pay for the war (and escape from its own American loans as far as it could).

It did not want any talk of a "*freedom of the seas*". Lloyd George rejected Wilson's call for it in his Fourteen Points, telling him that depriving Britain of the power of blockade would never be acceptable to the British electorate. When Britain talked of the "*freedom of the seas*", it meant something different from Wilson. Britain meant its freedom to police the seas in its own interests, determining how much freedom should be allowed to other nations, and what size of navies they could have. And it wanted to maintain the right to control maritime trade when it declared war.

England did not want arms limitation, unless it was exempted from it. And it did not want plebiscites or elections determining the fate of territories—as witnessed in its behaviour in Ireland in 1918-22. Elsewhere in its vast and expanded empire obstacles were put up against other reluctant subject peoples exercising this right.

Another reason Britain did not want plebiscites and elections determining the fate of territories—except where they served to disrupt another Power—was because it had already made secret treaty arrangements that elections would not support.

So it saw off the efforts of Pope Benedict and the gullible Anglophile President Wilson and set about exercising the mastery of the world for which it had launched its Great War..

The Fourteen Points and the Armistice

Wilson's failure to get the Inter-Allied Conference in November 1917 to agree to his war aims led him to issue his own, the Fourteen Points. The Fourteen Points were Wilson's programme of world peace by means of open covenants between Powers, freedom of the seas, removal of all tariffs, arms reduction, international arbitration of competing claims based on interests of people involved, evacuation of Russia and Belgium by German armies, Alsace Lorraine to be returned to France and an independent league of nations to guarantee political independence and territorial integrity.

Wilson apparently decided on this course to counteract the effect of the Bolshevik's negotiation of a separate peace with Germany and the release by them of the details of the Allied Secret Treaties. The Fourteen Points were meant to ensure that popular morale in the *Entente* countries did not crack in the face of the public exposure by the Bolsheviks of the selfish Imperialist war objectives. But they achieved much more.

An Armistice to end the war was discussed in October and signed in November 1918. Germany accepted the Armistice after assurances that the peace settlement would be based on Wilson's Fourteen Points. But that turned out to be another Great Fraud.

Germany signed the Armistice believing it had signed up to a peace based on Wilson's Fourteen Points and it encouraged the Kaiser to make himself scarce after being led to believe that was a pre-requisite of an honourable settlement. But it soon was presented with what amounted to a demand for unconditional surrender. And the Royal Navy blockade was intensified and continued for another eight months to ensure Germany's cessation of hostilities became an unconditional surrender.

The Siege of Europe

The British blockade had developed into a siege of the continent. In fact the 'Siege of Europe' was the name a number of important British writers in geopolitics gave to the Royal Navy blockade and military encirclement of Germany which began in August 1914 and which continued up until July 1919. It was, therefore, another name for the Great War amongst those who had a deeper and more thoughtful understanding of the war on Germany that England embarked on.

Among the writers who took the Great War to be the Siege of Europe were Sir Halford Mackinder and Alfred Zimmern. Mackinder stated in *'Democratic Ideals and Reality'*: "We have been fighting lately, in the close of the war, a straight duel between land-power and sea-power, and sea-power has been laying siege to land-power. We have conquered…" (p.62)

Alfred Zimmern, a thoughtful geopolitical thinker in the influential *Round Table*/Chatham House foreign policy circles, described the war as fundamentally a showdown between the maritime power of England and the developing potential land-power of Continental Europe, led by Germany, in which the Royal Navy was the decisive element:

> "The economic history of Europe during the century between the close of the Napoleonic wars and the British Declaration of war against Germany in 1914 is a record of continuous advance. Europe became threaded with railways, telegraphs, and telephones… the continent became linked together by all the international contrivances of 19th century commercialism and enterprise… banks and excepting houses… By 1914 Europe as a whole was opened up to the influences of modern industrialism… and had become the most important and central member of an economic system worldwide in its organization and connections. Able to draw on the raw materials of the overseas world for her manufacturers, she was steadily increasing both in prosperity and population… Such was the system under which men earned their bread in Europe when the leading sea-power declared war against the leading land-power, and cut the greater part of Europe off from the world. The results, after four and a half years of imprisonment and isolation, was an economic transformation even more drastic and far-reaching than the political changes by which it was accompanied. If the strategic history of the war is ever written under its true name it will be entitled 'The Siege of Europe.' The blockade was indeed the decisive instrument of allied power, and it has altered the economic life of Europe beyond recognition..." (*Europe in Convalescence*, pp. 13-15)

Germany, under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, was precluded from investing capital in any neighbouring country and had to forfeit all rights "to whatever title it may possess in these countries." The Allies were given free access to the German market without tariff while products made in Germany faced high foreign tariff barriers. Articles 264 to 267 established that Germany "undertakes to give the Allies and their associates the status of most favoured nations for five years."

Zimmern expressed the view that the war in its fundamentals represented a British drive to disrupt the continuing economic development of the continent and head off the development of a European trading zone growing under German hegemony—a Customs Union or kind of early European Community. He seems to have felt that that possibility had been seen off forever by the Royal Navy.

Zimmern, though, being a thoughtful observer of the situation, wondered whether the destruction of this system, in Britain's interest, was really good for Europe. He also wondered what might emerge out of the destruction brought about by the British blockade. And his book, *'Europe in Convalescence'*, written in 1919, is a kind of wrestling with the situation Britain's Siege of Europe had created and a plea to those in power to understand what they had done and deal with it so that it did not turn into a nightmare.

Germany besieged

In 1917 a book by Halford Macfall, entitled *'Germany at Bay'*, appeared in print to explain to the British public the true strategic objective of the Great War. It had an introduction by Viscount French to show it had the imprimatur of the great and the good.

In a chapter entitled *'The Siege of Germany'* it described the war waged by Germany not as an aggressive attempt at world domination, as countless publications of British propaganda had previously done, but as a desperate attempt to break out of a siege that was being organised around it. Below are two extracts. The first explains the opening manoeuvre of the Germans, which was used as the pretext for war against them, as primarily a defensive movement to break the siege:

> "This hard fighting to turn the German sea-flank and in any case to keep it from the sea, was frantically resisted by the Germans who, though they saw the siege closing in on them, had not the initiative to prevent it, but sought to keep that siege as far forward in France as they could, so that they might secure their future frontier in France… This ideal new frontier along the Aisne had been powerfully fortified during the outmarch on Paris as the line they would have to hold, even if France were conquered, when the German hosts should be swiftly withdrawn to crush Russia. This fighting we may call the struggle against being besieged…" (p.163)

In another section Macfall described how the German tactical offensives were fundamentally strategic defensive actions aimed at peace in Europe (and conversely the Entente waged a perpetual war of attrition aimed at strangulating until Germany called for quarter):

> "Let there be no mistake about it. Siege in the West for Germany meant utter ruin and hopeless ruin, and means the more utter and hopeless ruin the longer it lasts, unless she can get Peace to relieve it. From the moment that Germany was defeated on the Marne… it was her supreme strategy—and she knows it well—to play for Peace. From that November she has resolutely desired Peace. In Peace lies her sole salvation… Peace there must be, and soon, if Germany was not to bleed to death. Every month of the western siege, combined with war with Russia, meant a stage nearer the abyss. The initiative in the West was with Joffre and the British; and the British could and would increase in strength and power by the very delay that meant ruin for the besieged. That is the clear strategical truth of this war. There is no getting away from it… And it is incumbent on the Man-in-the-Street to realize that strategical hard truth. Let him never mistake Germany's great battles in the West from the November of 1914 as anything else but mighty efforts at sorties by a huge besieged garrison. When writers talk of the German 'initiative' in the West, they talk childishly… A siege is not judged by the length of 'advance' made — it is judged by the amount to which the garrison is reduced and broken." (pp.183-8.)

Another writer (*A.C.D.*) for the greatly influential *Naval Review* (August 1930) reviewing the book, *The Naval Blockade 1914-18*, by Lieutenant Louis Guichard of the French Navy had this to say:

> "The blockade constituted the economic background of the war. It was largely devised, engineered and operated by England. But there is no English history of it. It was unique. It represented the bridge between the naval and economic operations of the war; its ramifications spread like a vast network over the economic life of the whole world; it overturned the previous structure of International Law. But if anyone wishes to make a comprehensive study of its workings, he will find it difficult to find a guide for the Official History has little to say about it. This omission has constituted a serious gap in the history of the war." (Volume XVIII, No.3, p. 597)

The Royal Navy blockade of Germany was, from Britain's view, the decisive factor in Germany's defeat. It proved to be effective in cutting off Germany's imports of food and material, and led to the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare which brought America into the war and tightened the noose around Germany. And it was maintained for eight months after the official ending of the war, resulting in the starvation of more than half a million civilians, mostly children, in order to turn Germany's conditional surrender at the Armistice into an unconditional one in July 1919.

Most readers will be under the impression that the Great War finished in November 1918, and they will be totally unaware that the Allies continued the war against Germany for another eight months. There are not many history books that refer to the fact that there was a naval blockade in place against Germany until April 1919 to secure German compliance with Allied terms.

The Official History

Lieutenant Guichard wondered why in 1930 there was no history of the blockade despite its central importance in the war.

The *Official History of the Blockade* by Archibald Colquhoun Bell was actually completed in 1921, and produced and printed in 1937. But it has a stamp on it declaring it for "official purposes only". A limited number of copies were produced for the Ministries of state in Whitehall. But it was not released for general circulation until it was issued by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1961 (although the Nazis having obtained a copy published a German version in 1943).

It is one of the most interesting records of the Great War, being strongly factual and only minimally propagandist and details the intricate planning of the Admiralty and Committee of Imperial Defence, going back a decade before the Great War, and the comprehensive measures that were taken in execution of the Royal Navy's blockade of Germany.

It can only be presumed that while it was considered of vital importance to produce a detailed analysis of it for future reference it was not politic to draw public attention to it. To this day the blockade only merits a passing mention in histories of the Great War and school books. And there are very few who know how many died as a result of it..

Professor A.C. Bell, using German data, argued that the food blockade achieved its pre-war objective of fomenting revolution in Germany and finally caused the collapse of the Kaiser's Government. In Bell's study, contemporary accounts, records from the British Ministry of Blockade, British and German cabinet minutes, and demographic evidence from German sources, are used to show the extent to which famine conditions prevailed throughout Germany.

Bell reveals that it was estimated that the average adult required 2,300 calories daily to preserve health and strength in 1914. By 1917 the blockade had succeeded in reducing the calorie intake of Germans in the towns and cities to 1,000 per person. The Royal Navy had also succeeded in reducing the consumption of meat to 10 per cent of its pre-war level.

Bell cites the figure of 300,000 deaths within Germany specifically owing to the blockade, after it really began to bite during 1918. He puts the total number of deaths from the blockade from 1914 to the Armistice in 1918 at 760,000. And 250,000 Germans died in the eight months of blockade after the Armistice as the Royal Navy was used against a defenceless Germany to produce acquiescence to the peace treaty.

That means that the Royal Navy blockade killed over a million civilians behind the lines during the course of the war.

Producing 'The Huns of 1940'

The "physical degeneration" of the Germans seems to have been a British objective if an article by Mr. F. W. Wile in the *Weekly Despatch* of September 10th 1918 is anything to go by. This article, written by a well-known Berlin correspondent of the Northcliffe press, who visited the US as part of the great British propaganda drive in 1917, was entitled *'The Huns of 1940*'.

The article throws some light on British thinking with regard to warfare and eugenics. Written only two months short of the Armistice it looked forward not only to the defeat of Germany but also to the inflicting of harm on German children and the future (unborn) generations of Germans—presumably so that they would be kept down for a long time to come.

The author entitled his article *'The Huns of 1940'* because he felt that the effects of the British blockade on the quality of the German 'racial stock' would really be seen 20 years hence in a degenerate form of humanity which he called "DAMAGED HUMAN GOODS".

It should be pointed out to the reader that the present writer

has not emphasized the passages which are produced in capital letters. The capital letters are the work of the original author. These parts have been given dramatic affect by the writer, Mr. Wile, and they are the most vicious within the article.

I do not know whether the author was alive in 1940 to see the fruit of the British blockade of Germany when Hitler was implementing the policy of *Lebensraum* to prevent another starvation blockade. However, I do not think that Mr. Wile would have been altogether pleased with what happened when the *'Huns of 1940'* gave the next British Expeditionary Force a sound beating and forced off the continent with its tail between its legs, in the space of a couple of weeks.

If anything it shows how much Hitler was a man after the heart of Mr. Wile and the other racial theorists of British Imperialism, and it would not be far from the truth to suggest that in many ways Hitler had been 'Made in England'

Below, then, is the brutal honesty of how Liberal England wages war, behind all the fraudulent morality and niceties of 'war for small nations' and 'war of civilization.' It does not make pretty reading, with its descriptions of the effects on the civilians of Germany of the Royal Navy blockade. And it does not express unease about them either, but describes them with the relish of a nation determined on victory at all costs and for all time:

"THE HUNS OF 1940"

"THE REAL EFFECTS OF THE BLOCKADE ON GERMANY ARE STILL TO BE EXPERIENCED BY THAT CRIMINAL NATION. By that I mean that the under-nourishment which it has suffered for the past four years, and is still suffering, will manifest itself in the years to come, on even a more terrible scale than anything thus far undergone.

"What is the effect on the German civilian population of the practically complete stoppage of imported foodstuffs and all the reduction of home-grown foodstuffs, (principally meat and fats) owing to lack of foreign fodder? The effect has been that diseases of the most virulent and devastating character are rampant from one end of the country to the other. GERMANY TODAY IS A LAND OF PLAGUE. The white scourge, tuberculosis, is epidemic. Hunger-typhus is raging in numerous districts. Dysentery claims hundreds of victims. Diseases of the skin (due to lack of soap and shaving materials) prevail on an alarming scale. Infectious maladies like diphtheria, scarlet fever, and typhoid of various types are seriously destructive of child-life. Shortage of milk has produced calamitous conditions among young mothers, infants, and invalids."

"In Berlin, in June, no milk at all could be obtained even when the applicants possessed a doctor's certificate. Only children under two years of age were allowed milk, and older children were suffering terribly from the want of it. The intervening three months have brought no relief. The famine in fats not only continued but grows worse. The Germans have one meatless week a month now, and even vegetarians will admit, I suppose, that the cumulative effect of such restrictions on a race of meat-eaters is bound to be deleterious."

"The Germans made much capital during the war of the fact—incongruous on its face—that their birth rate actually increased on the average, since 1914. Whether the situation in that respect is as favourable today as the earlier periods of the war I strongly question. But the point is not HOW MANY babies are now, or at any time, born in Germany, or anywhere else, but WHAT KIND of babies. The birth rate may be satisfactory from the standpoint of officials whose business it is to juggle with vital statistics, but what is considerably more essential for the future German race is whether these babies are EUGENIC (healthy) or DISGENIC (unhealthy)…"

"If German parents of today are malnourished, or underfed, or semi-starved, or poisoned by the thousand and one so-called weird food 'substitutes' on which they are now existing, their offspring will be correspondingly inferior products. They will be subject to a vast variety of hereditary ailments. They will be less able to resist infections like tuberculosis. They may be crippled, deformed, or undersized. What is certain is that no amount of dumbbells, Indian clubs, or Prussian barrack-yard drill—no amount of gymnastics in the Germans' vaunted 'Turnverein'—can straighten the legs or arms of the children of malnourished parents or pump good red blood into their anaemic veins, or otherwise modify the permanent marks which Nature will have left imprinted upon their defective constitutions."

"While the birth rate in Germany may be satisfactory on its face, DAMAGE RATE—the INERADICABLE DAMAGE RATE—is a different and a far more serious matter. I should say that for every more or less normal infant life preserved in Germany under present conditions, there are three or four infants who are condemned to live and grow into DAMAGED HUMAN GOODS, so to speak. That means that in 1940 there will in all probability be a race of German physical degenerates."

The Famine lever

The *Official History of the Blockade* describes the exercise in counting the number of defenceless Germans killed by the Royal Navy as "frivolous." Killing the poor, the unborn, the young and women was not what the great planning, effort and machinery that went in to the blockade was all about. The killing of innocents was a mere by-product of the actual objective. As Bell states the important question was: "What damage was done to the national resistance of Germany?"

The *Official History* in answering this question concludes that the great achievement of the Royal Navy campaign was to "infect the German people with an anger against authority, wherever situated." (p.674)

Just before the Armistice famine conditions were prevalent in many German cities and industrial regions. More than 3,500 people were dying each day of hunger and malnutrition in those months. In the eight months from the signing of the Armistice to the lifting of the blockade at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the records indicate that in Germany, an additional 250,000 deaths occurred among civilians, above the normal pre-war death rate. Forty per cent of these deaths occurred in November 1918 alone, as the British extended the blockade after the Armistice. Deaths were particularly severe among women and children. Women in childbirth perished at a massive rate and infant mortality soared.

The official observers sent from Britain to Germany between December 1918 and April 1919, to verify German statements at the Armistice negotiations that famine was imminent in Germany, were instructed to confirm whether the food shortages would lead to starvation and thus create a 'tendency to increase Bolshevism'. Most of them reported that Germany was indeed on the verge of starvation, and that Bolshevism was probable if the Royal Navy continued to restrict the food supply.

Their visit was followed by a fact-finding mission to Germany by Winston Churchill's War Department. It concluded that most essential foods in Germany would run out in the early spring, while the harvest for 1919 would probably yield only about half of the average pre-war crop.

The report, dated 16th February 1919, concluded that "while Germany is still an enemy country, it would be inadvisable to remove the menace of starvation by a too sudden and abundant supply of foodstuffs. This menace is a powerful lever for negotiation at an important moment".

Balfour, at that time Foreign Secretary, summed up the value to British interests of the continuation of the blockade in a joint

War Office and Foreign Office memorandum, prepared on 21st January 1919, arguing that it would speed up the signing of the peace treaty. It would help to control the prices of Germany's food imports and provide a direct supply of food and raw materials to those provinces and proletariats resisting Bolshevism.

So by ensuring that the distribution of food and other supplies remained exclusively under the control of the Royal Navy and by using starvation as a weapon of war the Germans could be squeezed until they submitted to the full Allied demands and were made fight against Bolshevism.

Treaty of Versailles

The victors of the Great War met at Versailles to divide up the spoils of victory during 1919 as the starvation blockade was tightened. One hundred years before Versailles the peace of Europe had been settled after a major European and global conflict through the Congress of Vienna. That peace conference in 1814-5 preserved the peace of Europe for generations. But Versailles led to another, even more destructive, world war in less than two decades.

A major difference between Vienna and Versailles was that the defeated Powers and the neutrals were invited to the 1814-5 Congress and the main defeated Power, France, had an influence on the redrawing of the map of Europe. Wellington and Castlereagh understood the foremost objective at peace conferences was to create conditions conducive to the peace and stability of Europe. And they realised that the defeated should be shown leniency, to prevent future grievance, and their cooperation sought, so that their interest could also be taken into account in any settlement.

Because France was treated with leniency she exhibited no aggression in Europe for half a century (except for a minor interlude on Britain's side in the Crimean War).

But that was in the days of aristocratic wars fought for selfish state interest when parliamentary representation was the preserve of the upper classes. The Great War was a mass democratic war fought by the middle classes and their working class cannon fodder for a high moral purpose. Such a war could not end with the evil having any say in the peace of the good, especially when the masses had been worked up about this to sacrifice themselves at the front.

And the few countries that remained neutral could also not be included in the restructuring of Europe. Morality lay entirely with the victors who were going to make sure no voices were going to dispute their moral judgement on the continent.

The starvation blockade was relaxed after the Germans submitted to Versailles and it was then used as a lever to return Germany to the authority of the government that signed the *dikta*t. By then Bolshevism had become a real danger and Germany had to be managed back to order so that the government could impose the terms of the treaty on its population. So the provision of food was rationed out to secure German obedience to the peace terms and the new regime at Weimar.

This was achieved through the placing of the German merchant navy under the control of the Allied command so that it could not engage in feeding the German population independently of how much the British wanted them to be fed. And the threat was ever-present that if the German government and populace did not remain compliant it could be starved again at will.

'The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade Of Germany, 1915-1919', by C. Paul Vincent describes some of the effects of the blockade: "The victimized youth of 1915-1920 were to become the most radical adherents of National Socialism" (p.112). And Vincent concludes that: "The ominous amalgamation of twisted emotion and physical degeneration, which was to presage considerable misery for Germany and the world, might have been prevented had it not been for the postwar policy of the Allies. The immediate centrepiece of this policy was the blockade." (pp. 164-5.)

Across the Blockade

Henry Noel Brailsford's *'Across the Blockade: A Record of Travels in Enemy Europe'* is a book that is long forgotten. But it deserves to be re-read to understand what Britain did to Germany through its Great War, and specifically through the Royal Navy blockade that made it what it became.

Brailsford, an English socialist, journeyed through blockaded Europe in early 1919 and described the conditions of life he found in Hungary, Austria, Poland and Germany.

When we hear about the Nazis today we are lectured on 'the warning from history' they apparently represent. But Noel Brailsford's account of Europe under the British blockade in 1919 is a true warning for history. It was published at a time when the National Socialists hardly existed. But it explains how the British blockade more than anything else was producing all the conditions that made Hitler.

That is why this extended passage is worth including in this account: to give the reader an appreciation of how Britain's Great War of 1914 produced a second one a generation later out of what it did to Germany.

Here is Brailsford's incisive and informative account, written in May 1919:

> "No one is surprised to hear of the physical consequences of nearly five years' progressive under-feeding. The children are sickly and stunted: tuberculosis rages: the old die off at the first touch of disease: the birth-rate falls in some towns and in some classes to near vanishing point: the death-rate rises: the average man and woman in the streets is visibly listless and anemic: the sturdiest workman is incapable of his former efforts and his habitual endurance. These things can be measured and proved by statistics. The more elusive nervous consequences of malnutrition are no less obvious, when one has seen these defeated peoples in the mass at public meetings or in street demonstrations. The discipline of North Germany, the geniality of South Germany are no longer characteristic. Thinking is active, feverish, and destructive… The whole current of political thought is 'to the Left', and the party leader dreads only that his followers should desert him for a less moderate competitor. I found myself at first inclined to treat the recklessness of this political speculation as a verbal extravagance. I changed my mind after I had seen unarmed crowds in Vienna facing rifle-fire with a barely sane contempt of death, and risking their lives to pick up a little coal or to cut a fallen horse into butcher-meat. I changed it even more after I had watched the ascendancy over the Berlin Workers' 'Soviet' of Communist speakers, whose tones and gestures at once betrayed a neurotic condition. Years of poverty and semi-starvation have sapped the morals of the blockaded peoples. An elaborate social structure has fallen into decay, like a farm which returns to the wilderness when cultivation ceases. The once incorruptible civil service of Germany, with its tremendous pride in the ethics of the official caste, is no longer proof against bribes. Theft and even robbery have become frequent, as they were not in the old days, and one heard of girls who would sell themselves for a cake of soap.
>
> "We are pleased to talk of Huns, but when history tells the whole story of the working of this blockade from the Urals to the Rhine, in the hospitals that lack drugs, linen, and anesthetics, in the garrets where dying children call to unemployed fathers, in

the streets where desperate mobs pillage under the fire of brutalized troops, the next generation will ask with probing curiosity what devastation it was that Attila wrought to compare with this achievement of ours.

"Even if the blockade were lifted to-morrow, if food were poured in, and credits granted to restart industry, I doubt whether German politics would then, begin to enter a normal path. The sounder a people is, and the more its health recovers, the more will it seek to open some door of hope. The crime of this treaty is that it kills hope. Every one in Germany had hope for an end of wars: but there will be no rest, if these annexations to Poland are maintained. Every one had built on the League of Nations: it is at best a disappointing structure, and from it Germany is excluded. To unite with Austria would have been some compensation for the loss of Alsace and Posen, which every one knew to be just: that also is excluded. All this, however, is trifling, compared with the economic ruin that faces Germany.

"To lose every trading center, and footing, and facility in China, Africa, Turkey, Russia; to lose the entire mercantile fleet, to be denied reciprocal rights in tariffs, transport, foreign residence; to see no prospects of obtaining raw materials on equal terms — all this means, to say nothing of the humiliation, a return to the economic conditions of the middle of last century."

"With no means of restoring her foreign trade, Germany must somehow maintain a population which can live only by foreign trade. Apart altogether from the indemnity, that prospect means ruin in the most literal sense. It means that for some fifteen millions of the population it will be impossible by exchange to purchase the necessary food from abroad."

"Of the indemnity I will say nothing: it cannot under these conditions be paid. One may ruin Germany, if one so pleases. One might exact, after a couple of years for recuperation, a reasonable contribution for reparation. One cannot do both. How will the future shape under this treaty! Will it, in the first place, be signed! The odds are that, sooner or later (probably sooner), it will be signed. There lives no single German who would sign it, save under the dread of literal starvation… The Majority Socialists and the Catholic Center are both divided, but both on the whole incline to sign in the last resort under protest, for their working-class followers (including the Center's Catholic women voters) would not pardon leaders who condemned them to starvation. The Independents are almost alone in saying openly that there is no alternative to signature… In any event the moral value of this signature will be less than nothing, for it will mean only that in the present condition of anemia half the nation lacks the heroism to starve. The act, whether of signing or not signing, will be fatal to the present Coalition. Their prestige at present is very low. If they sign, it will be lower still. If they should refuse to sign, the starving masses would wholly desert them.

"I doubt whether as yet any single tendency is strong enough to dominate Germany after the hour of humiliation, and to hew out a road of hope. Parliament is flat, dull, and remote, and its ranks poor in notable personalities. There may be an attempt to form an all-Socialist Cabinet, but it could not secure unity. It must on the one hand omit the most compromised 'Right' Socialists, especially the detested Noske… The Communist leaders whom I saw impressed me as nervous wrecks. Behind them is an army of desperate men, the war-cripples, the unemployed, the unemployable. In the general mood of despair the future belongs to the most reckless group. No one has much to lose, and even for the propertied class property has lost its value if trade is out of the question and the workers will not work.

"The Versailles plan of exploiting Germany for a generation omits all reckoning with human nature. As the Nation put it, men are not bees who will go on working if all the honey is taken periodically from the hive…

"The two real forces in Germany to-day are the new volunteer army on the one hand and the revolutionary workers on the other — the machine gun and the strike. This new Praetorian Guard, raised by Noske to crush Spartacus, numbers about 450,000 men… The signature of the treaty will require the disbandment of three-fourths of this new force, and the relics of the old army (about 300,000 men)… A powerful caste is about to be ruined, and the disbanded men and officers will be potentially revolutionary material. That Germany in its present condition can be policed by an army, however efficient, which numbers only 100,000 men, seems to me improbable.

"The treaty is triple nonsense. It expects Germany to earn vast sums, and to earn them without the right and facility to trade abroad. It expects some government to impose this servitude on the German workers, yet denies to that government the army which alone might hold them down in outward obedience. It robs fifteen million Germans of subsistence, and omits to provide them with a field for emigration.

"I am inclined to risk a prediction of the consequences of enforcing this treaty. They will not be interesting or eventful. For months to come Germany may be forgotten. She lacks the energy or the unity to act, though spasmodic essays, at positive action in opposite directions, may be attempted. The chief consequences will be negative. The workers will not work, or in so far as they work, it will be fitfully, half-heartedly, like angry, weary, and helpless men. So far from resenting this attitude, the middle-class employees will largely share it. Already the lines of class cleavage between the hand-worker and miserably sweated brain-worker have almost disappeared. This 'ca-canny' mood will affect the employers no less than the men. The natural tendency to repair machinery and restart trade will be checked at every turn by the knowledge that between the burden of internal taxation amounting to more than half the national income and the load of the foreign tribute, all chance of appreciable profits has disappeared. Banks will refuse credit, for until the first two years are over no one will know what Germany's liabilities really are, nor until she is admitted to the League will her chance of trade be worth estimating.

"The ruin will go on unchecked, and the irresistible conviction will grow that the only chance of restarting life lies in repudiating debts, or in socializing without compensation. The Entente, in short, by this treaty, is reducing Germany to a despair as deep as Russia's… Lethargy, despair, decay, the decline of an elaborate civilization, the slow lapse into disrepair of a good machine — that will be the immediate consequence of this treaty that murders hope. The German nation will wear itself out in abortive motions of unrest. It will flounder: it will sulk: it will decay. Injure us it cannot, save by its sickness, but this corpse is big enough to poison Europe." (pp.122-33)

It seems to me that Brailsford is describing here all the things that produced Hitler and the Nazis out of the distorting and catastrophic effects of the Royal Navy Blockade on a once highly functional society.

There is the shattering of European political order; there is the dislocation of the economy with widespread unemployment and poverty; there is the reduction of Germany to its elementals in politics; there are people driven to madness and desperation; there is the fear of hunger and the fundamental desire for order and security; there is the taking away of the means to achieve this until something is produced to do it; there is the feeling of the stab in the back about people who have given in to an obnoxious and humiliating *diktat*; there is a punitive and unjust settlement with its War Guilt clause imposed on a reluctant people at the threat of starvation; and there is the natural human desire for something or someone to give them hope again.

It appears that more than anything else it was the Royal

Navy's blockade, the fundamental means by which Britain waged its Great War on Germany, that produced Hitler.

Britain and the League

At the end of the war the League of Nations was established to give effect to the ideals of the war for which Britain had proclaimed itself to be fighting. These included democracy and the rights of small nations within a New World Order. Undoubtedly this was a great deception practised on the world by Britain for Imperial purposes and the League of Nations was something England agreed to establish largely in order to humour President Wilson.

This was shown to be the case since Britain sidelined the League of Nations by giving absolute priority in world affairs to its Empire, which it had greatly enlarged by winning the war. However, such a Great Fraud could not be practised with impunity and without great effects in the world. Britain itself might have cynically deceived people and nations across the world in the course of fighting and winning its Great War, but it could not switch off the deception when it had served its purpose. It had been outstandingly successful in agitating the world and saturating it with democratic idealism but it could not easily dampen down the passions it had released without admitting to have perpetrated a Great Fraud on humanity..

The Mandates idea that emerged at the end of the war was an attempt to square traditional Imperialist objectives with America's appearance on the world stage and the war propaganda for small nations. It is probable that if the Allies had been able to win the war without America there would have been a simple Imperialist division of spoils—or a war over those spoils between the Allies. But the entry into the War of anti-imperialist America meant the Imperialist Powers were forced to proceed in a tricky fashion, through the Mandates.

The objective also involved the drawing in of the United States to her "world responsibilities"—which meant convincing the Americans that they should take up the white man's burden that had been shouldered up to then by Britain *et al*, preferably in difficult, non-profitable regions such as 'Armenia' and 'Kurdistan'. The US sensibly declined to do Britain's dirty work in such quicksand.

In 1919 England needed the US because, by greatly enlarging its Empire, it had bitten off more than it could chew. And it had bitten off more than it could chew. It had neither the blood nor the treasure to expend in purposefully governing these acquisitions after its efforts in the War. And it was also determined in London that these new territories should not be permitted to go their own way lest they develop minds of their own or fall into the clutches of others, with a mind to rival Britain.

The Anglo-Saxon cousin was the perfect Imperialist since she was anti-Imperialist in inclination. She could not be a rival in the Imperialist sense to England but could keep the other Imperialists out and could do the work Britain would have done herself if she had emerged from the Great War as victor in 1915, plentiful in money and men.

George Washington had insisted, as a fundamental of Foreign Policy, that the United States should never become involved in European entanglements. His policy was adhered to throughout the nineteenth century. But it was abandoned by President Wilson in 1917. Now Britain, which had achieved American involvement in Europe, hoped that the United States would do the difficult and expensive work, in the contested areas of Britain's Imperial acquisitions, on Britain's behalf. And by being given the most difficult jobs in the world, perhaps America could be even worn down in the mire, and cut down to size as an emerging Power in the process.

Frederic C. Howe was sent by President Wilson to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Howe had admired the pre-War German accomplishment but he was, like his President, an Anglophile at heart, as his reminiscences of 1925, *'The Confessions of a Reformer'*, reveal. Howe's 1919 book, *'The Only Possible Peace',* is a fierce denunciation of Germany, which the author believed to be intent on world conquest through its Baghdad-Berlin Railway. And it is clear that until Howe encountered Britain in reality, in the peace-making process at Paris, he held the idealist Anglophile notion of English civilization and benevolence. But that was all to change from the time of his experiences in peacemaking at Paris.

The behaviour of the Allies at Paris left Howe thoroughly disillusioned with the Peace Conference and the League of Nations, particularly as it became evident that the good intentions of the President, and America, were being used by Britain and the other Imperial Powers in the service of the same old Imperialism.

Lloyd George outmanoeuvred Wilson by repeatedly threatening the President with British withdrawal if he did not give way. And all the time the British Prime Minister always had in mind that England and France would go back to settling Imperialist business between themselves when Wilson had been seen off.

There was a crucial vote in the United State's Senate on 19th November 1919, which put up conditions before the League of Nations could be ratified. Lloyd George was urged, by Sir Edward Grey among others, to accept these conditions, which chiefly guarded against America being pulled into military conflicts against its choosing. Grey had been persuaded out of retirement to go to the US to try to secure limitations of American naval expenditure. But Grey, who was used to dominating the Great Powers in the pre-War days, found it a very dispiriting experience. When the Americans stonewalled he asked London if he could be recalled, saying he had not come out of retirement to accept such indignity and nonsense.

Grey urged the Prime Minister to accept the Senate's reservations in order to pull in the US to "world responsibilities", and he wrote a letter to the Times to make his position public. But Lloyd George did just the opposite. In Parliament, in December 1919, he stated that the League must be a League of "equal members," with no member (such as the U.S.) having a right to have less responsibilities than any another. He said that whilst Britain would support the League it would now tend to its own specific interests in the world, without regard to it.

So the US steered clear of the *'entangling alliances'* of the Peace Conference and the League, and determined to be nobody's pawn in the world. It rejected Versailles and the Mandates in March 1920.

Britain's failure to secure American assistance for its reordering and governing of the world after 1919 had profound consequences. Lloyd George took it as giving England the freedom to go back to Imperialist work in conjunction, or competition, with the French, and this led him back to the Greeks and their Anatolian adventure that ended in tragedy for them and the end for him.

Ireland and the war for small nations

The British endgame also had startling effects on the situation in Ireland.

The German offensive of Spring 1918, before the Americans

arrived in force, exerted extreme pressure on Britain and caused it to decide to implement the *Conscription Act* in Ireland. Sinn Fein organised a campaign of resistance to conscription, and the Irish Parliamentary Party joined the campaign, with the result that Lord Curzon announced the suspension of both Conscription and Home Rule for Ireland.

This represented the final moral collapse of the Irish Parliamentary Party. For four years it had declared that the Great War Britain was fighting to save civilisation, yet it opposed a measure that Britain considered to be necessary for that purpose. By opposing conscription in alliance with the "*pro-Germans*" of Sinn Fein, it gave the lie to its war propaganda. It was then morally bankrupt.

But that was only the start of it. It soon became clear that victorious Britain, for whom 200,000 Irish had been recruited by Redmond, was not about to honour its "*Sacred Treaty*" with the Irish or anyone else. The Home Rule Bill had been passed on paper but it soon became clear that it was indeed only "a scrap of paper."

And Partition, which Redmond and Devlin promised their Northern recruits they would prevent by coming forward and fighting and dying for the Empire, had become another likely outcome of the Great War.

A great disillusion with Britain and Redmond's party set in.

That disillusion was compounded when Britain chose to ignore the Irish result of the General Election in November 1918 when Sinn Fein swept the polls and destroyed the Irish Parliamentary Party.

Then in 1919 Britain made war on the Irish electorate that had voted rebelliously. Military rule of a "*Prussian*" nature was then imposed to enforce British government in Ireland against the will of the populace.

The calculation of the British Government was that, if a firm hand was applied to the situation the Irish, would see sense once again as they had in the past. However, in 1919 the Irish stood by their electoral verdict. And so there was war.

Britain was taken unawares by the new stubborn resilience of the Irish, but Britain itself had contributed to this with its war propaganda and the militarism into which it had drawn hundreds of thousands of the Irish, battle-hardening them.

Before the war Britain had made the Irish understand that independence was out of the question for them. But then it had taken into a war for the right of small nations to determine their own destiny. And they didn't understand why they should fight for the right of other nations at Britain's behest and then allow Britain to deny the rights of Irish nationality.

The Irish sent a delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference to have their national decision for independent statehood recognised. When they were locked out of the Conference on Britain's orders, they established their democratic rights as a small nation by other means.

The problem of 'self-determination'

The principles, proclaimed by British war propagandists could not have but been taken in earnest across the world, as they were in Ireland.

Having been conjured up to facilitate the waging of a Great War they then took on a life of their own. But within a year of winning its war, Britain was making a mockery of the very principles which it had declared to be the purpose of the war. And it was employing methods which during the War it had denounced as "*Prussianism*" but which Germany had never actually engaged in.

The issue of 'self-determination' is a subject that has been curiously neglected by Irish historians, who seem to have taken it to be of the 'natural order of things' that the British Government, which was supposedly fighting for "*the freedom of small nations*" and establishing a great number of new states across Europe and the Near East where none had previously existed, would, in 1918, not respect the democratic decision of a people closer to home for 'self-determination'.

The vast majority of people in Ireland expected some British respect for the General Election result in Ireland. Why else would they have voted so overwhelmingly for Sinn Fein? To emphasize the point the newly established Dáil Eireann then took the trouble to appeal to the victors at Versailles on the basis of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points relating to self-determination and the democratic propaganda of the Allies.

Lionel Curtis, who was on the Liberal wing of British Imperialism, in his *Round Table* article of June 1921 gives something of the feeling of the British establishment about the democratic propaganda which was utilised to win the Great War on Germany but was never meant to have been taken in earnest, lest it cause great problems after the War in Ireland:

> "The tide of war had now turned against Germany; and as the prospect of peace came in sight President Wilson multiplied apophthegms. The stricken world swallowed them wholesale. Rich and luscious as honey, they offered nothing to bite on, and when kept for future application they lost the appearance of clarity and turned opaque. 'Shall strong nations be free to wrong weak nations and make them subject to their purpose and interest?' And again: 'All who sit at the peace table must be ready to pay the price, and the price is impartial justice, no matter whose interest is crossed.' British statesmen hastened to declare that all the problems of the war were soluble in the alcohol of 'self-determination,' which was… merely the English version of Sinn Fein. It was also a solvent upon which Lenin was consciously counting for the disintegration of civilized society. The effect of the formula is attested on all sides in Ireland. On November 5 (1918) the Irish Party proposed a motion calling on the Government to settle the Irish question in accordance with Wilsonian principles. It was voted out, the Government declaring that Ireland was a domestic question, and that no outside interference would be tolerated."

The first manifestation of the British double-standard was demonstrated when the Irish were refused entry to the Peace conference despite a resolution passed in the US Senate in support of their presence. And it got worse from there with the attempted suppression of the elected Irish Government, martial law and the Black and Tans.

The Northern Catholics

As the Great War began, the leader of the Unionist Party, Bonar Law and Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Unionists, made clear their intention of preventing the implementation of the Home Rule Bill in Ulster after the war, whether it was on the Statute Book or not. Carson told a meeting that the Home Rule Bill was "nothing but a scrap of paper" and the Ulster Volunteers would "kick out anybody who tries to put it into force in Ulster." (IN 29.9.14.)

Joe Devlin, the leader of the Home Rulers in the North attempted to counter the idea that the Home Rule Bill was a dead letter in a speech he gave in the National Club, Belfast, on 9th October. Referring to the placing of the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book Devlin stated to those he was seeking to recruit as soldiers for the Great War:

"It represents a solemn treaty of peace and goodwill among the nations, and those who would attempt to treat it as a 'mere scrap of paper' would be essaying a moral infamy not less odious than the German Emperor committed in violating the neutrality of Belgium (hear, hear). But on one thing, I think, the Irish people can rest assured, and that is that in the face of the declaration of the Premier and of the Liberal and Tory leaders on the sacredness of treaties, and on the rights of small nationalities, there will be no disposition on the part of either of the great British Parties to perpetuate upon Ireland, when peace has been restored, an infamy which would be greater than that which they have denounced to the world as the justification for involving Great Britain in the greatest war of all time..." (*Irish News*, 10.11.14)

Devlin was to be sorely disappointed and a great disillusion was to set in among Northern Catholics over the fraud that was perpetrated upon them.

The greatest victims of Britain's Great War in Ireland were the Northern Catholics. A year after the Armistice and the 'war for small nations' there was no sign of the Home Rule Act that their leaders had claimed lay ready and waiting for the end of the war. The Home Rule Party had recruited hundreds of thousands to fight for the Empire on the understanding that Ireland had already been granted its Home Rule Parliament and it was only the Suspensory Act—that was due to run out at the war's end—that was preventing its implementation. What was more the British army they fought for and local Unionist forces were being used to suppress the small nation's democratic verdict of 1918.

The rapid disillusionment of the Northern Catholics with the Imperial Government and all things Imperial was evident in The Irish News' reaction to the first ever appeal for Armistice Day. It is a sobering statement that should be placed against latter-day Poppycock and Remembrance. The heading of its editorial was *'No Armistice Here!'*:

"The war on the French and Belgian front was ended at 'the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month,' 1918. Hostilities on the Irish front are conducted by the Government with more virulence than ever a year after the date of the Continental Armistice… Amongst those who died to defeat the Germans were scores of thousands of Irish Nationalists. But many Nationalist soldiers, who fought as gallantly as their comrades who died, have returned; and we doubt whether there is one amongst the survivors to whom the appeal… will not come as a mockery and taunt. Those Irish soldiers went out to the fields of slaughter freely, not as conscripts but as enthusiastic volunteers, to fight and shed their blood for the 'rights and liberties of small nations'. Thousands of the bravest of them fell. The thousands who escaped came home to find their own small nation betrayed, crushed under a juggernaut of Coercion, denied the slightest gleam of the rights and liberties secured by their valour and self-sacrifice for the Poles and Esthonians, Croats, Czecho-Slovaks and Jugo-Slavs, overridden by an Ascendancy whose rampant intolerance has increased rather than diminished since the 17th century, and not only debarred from political freedom but threatened with economic destruction.

"We know from the reports of their meetings published in our columns how the Veterans of the Great War feel in Belfast and the North of Ireland; we have seen it stated recently on the authority of an English correspondent that the men who fought the Germans to the last gasp and who returned to the South and West of Ireland are now members of the Sinn Fein organisation and active drill-masters amongst the Irish Volunteers… it is certain that not an Irish Nationalist ex-soldier in this country or Great Britain thinks of his experiences and the net result of his work on Europe's battlefields with any other feeling than bitterness deep and enduring.

"We are asked to stand still 'so that the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the Glorious Dead'. The two minutes of profound stillness will be given to thoughts of what William H. Redmond and Thomas M. Kettle would say had they lived to see the Ireland of their love in the position to which British statesmanship has brought it a year after the last shots were exchanged between Germany and the Allies…

"No matter how the anniversary of the Armistice in Europe may be celebrated in free countries, the battle on the Irish front proceeds without suggestion of Armistice from Whitehall or Dublin Castle…" (*Irish News*, 8.11.19)

Elsewhere, in the same edition, the Irish News published the thoughts of "*an Irish ex-soldier*" who "pictures the thoughts of all Nationalists" regarding the Armistice commemorations of the Great War in Britain and Ireland. The former soldier wrote:

"There is no armistice or no peace for Ireland. Thousands of Irish Nationalists who fought through the Great War will breathe a prayer for their comrades dead today; they will also mutter a curse that they ever left the home shores….

"Death might have been easier… but they lived, and came home—to suffer more. One thousand of them walk their native Belfast streets to-day—turned from the workshops and the foundries—told to 'go elsewhere' out of 'loyal' Belfast if they want to exercise the right to work.

"That is their reward; and mighty England doesn't care, for England's hour of need has passed. And what of Willie Redmond and Tom Kettle and all the rest?… They died for Ireland… we will give them all a thought to-day. Perhaps it is better that they did not live to see the evil which British treachery has wrought."

Disillusion was becoming widespread even amongst the strongest believers in good British intentions in Ireland and the world. But it was not yet complete. The real nightmare was just about to become a reality when the Catholics of the North were told they were to become a subdued and permanent minority within the perverse new construct of 'Northern Ireland' cut off from the rest of the Irish nation and also from the normal political structures of the UK state.

Britain had won its Great War but they had become another set of victims of the Great Fraud it had perpetrated on the world

Pat Walsh

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